

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday 9 February 2011

2.00-3.20 p.m. in AG01

PRESENT:

L Barry	Y Gao	M Molony
F Blin	D Gray	A Morrissey
O Bree	S Hashmi	M Munro
C Brennan	J Hughes	N Murphy
P Brereton	S Ingle	M Nic Giolla Mhichíl
J Brunton	B Kelly	E O'Connell
J Bruton	M Kirwan	R O'Connor
C Byrne	S Knowlton	P Ó Flatharta
J Carroll	A Leahy	J O'Hara
L Caul	C Long	R O'Kennedy
J Costello	L Looney	E O'Riordan
E Cunningham	C Loscher	A Pearson-Evans
B Daly	C Mac an Bhaird	A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)
Y Delauré	B McConalogue	P Sheehan
P Donnelly	B MacCraith (Chair)	D Sinclair
J Dowling	L McDermott (Secretary)	M Slowey
T Draper	C McDonagh	M Smyth
O Finlayson	I McGlynn	A Stover
B Flood	C McGonagle	R Tobin
R Flynn	A McGrady	X Wang
J Fox	P McMorrow	S Wickham
S Fox	D McMullin	

APOLOGIES:

A Armstrong	E Guilfoyle	B Pierce
S Blott	C Holland	D Reynolds
J Bosak	G Hughes	R Sadleir
P J Byrne	M Humphrys	A Sinnott
B Casey	J Lynch	D Turley

J Connolly
M Farren
P Flood

C Mac Murchaidh
G Murphy
M O'Connell

A Way
P Willis
P Young

IN ATTENDANCE:

P Mooney

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted.

A: Minutes and related issues

2. Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 8 December 2010

The minutes were confirmed subject to the substitution of the word 'Retention' for the word 'Progression' at the beginning of the fourth sentence in Item 4.2. They were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Noted that a working group with representation from Registry, Faculty Administration, Information Systems and Services and Oscail had been established with the aim of recommending modifications to the ITS Calculate programme to take account of the changes to Marks and Standards, approved by Academic Council on 22 December 2010, in respect of continuous assessment resits. The group is expected to complete its work by the end of April 2011, i.e. prior to the use of the Calculate programme for the June 2011 Programme Board Examination Review Committees and Progression and Awards Boards. (Item 3.1)

3.2 Noted that information on student persistence and progression had been made available on a per-programme basis to the Executive Deans of Faculty by the Institutional Analysis and Research Officer and that it would be desirable for any Programme Chair who had not yet seen the information relevant to his/her programme to do so. (Item 4.2)

3.3 Noted that proposals relating to INTRA had been submitted to the Heads' and Deans' group and that consideration of these proposals would be undertaken by the Education Committee at its meeting of 2 March 2011. The importance of leveraging the recent University-wide initiative on learning outcomes to enhance the effectiveness of

- INTRA, and of ensuring integration with the ongoing work to embed the graduate attributes (see Item 3.4 below), was noted. (Item 4.3)
- 3.4** Noted that a project plan aimed at providing a structured method for mainstreaming the graduate attributes had been developed and submitted in draft form for the consideration of the Education Committee at its meeting of 2 February 2011, that a version of it, slightly modified on the basis of the EC recommendations, would now be implemented and that Faculties would be kept abreast of developments. (Item 4.4)
- 3.5** Noted that the number of days permitted for the preparation of examination appeals submissions would, for the academic session 2011/12 and on a pilot basis, be ten as distinct from the current fourteen. (Item 6.5)
- 3.6** Noted that, on the basis of comments made by members of Academic Council at the meeting of 8 December 2010, the initiative previously referred to as ‘teaching quality evaluation’ is now referred to as ‘teaching quality evaluation and enhancement’ to take account of its focus on supporting academic staff and developing professional competence. A cross-University working group, chaired by Dr Joe O’Hara, Head of the School of Education Studies, has been established to make recommendations on the issue. Academic Council will be kept informed of developments. (Item 7)
- 4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 3 November 2010 and 1 December 2010**
- 4.1** Approved.
- 4.2** The list of activities undertaken and/or completed in 2010 by the Education Committee, the University Standards Committee and the Graduate Studies Board was noted with approval.
- 5. Minutes of the meetings of the University Standards Committee of 30 September 2010 and 4 November 2010**
- Approved.
- 5.1 Proposals on the appointment of external examiners**
- Approved. Noted that the proposals on length of service, and reciprocity of service with other institutions, were designed to enhance examiners’ independence. Noted that transitional arrangements would, if necessary in the case of individual nominated

examiners, apply in the academic session 2011/12. The importance of staggering appointments so as to avoid any sudden significant loss of expertise was noted.

5.2 Proposed policy and procedures in respect of the Recognition of Prior Learning

Approved. Noted that the policy would be very helpful in addressing needs in terms of lifelong learning as identified in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (see Item 6.1 below). Noted that the working group on RPL had decided to finalise its proposals prior to the completion of the related work being undertaken at sectoral level by the Framework Implementation Group, as this work had been delayed. Noted that a decision would be taken, in the context of the severe constraints imposed by the Employment Control Framework, about the staffing resource that it would be possible to make available to implement the policy and procedures, and that a related decision would be taken about which unit should house this resource. Appreciation was expressed to Dr Sheelagh Wickham and Dr Jean Hughes, the current and former chairs of the working group, and to the members, for their very significant work in developing the policy and procedures.

5.3 Minutes of the meetings of the Graduate Studies Board of 1 July 2010 and 2 September 2010

Approved. Noted that, since the meeting of 2 September 2010, further developments had taken place with respect to the proposed establishment of Higher Doctorates.

B: Policy and strategy issues

6. President's report, including consideration of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*

6.1 *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*

6.1.1 The Chair summarised the main features of the report, noting that it marked the beginning of a new type of relationship between the universities and a strengthened Higher Education Authority, that the Implementation Group is currently being established with a view to making rapid progress towards the implementation of the recommendations in the report and that this progress is likely to continue regardless of the outcome of the forthcoming general election.

6.1.2 Some concern was expressed by members of Council in relation to aspects of the report: it was suggested that it takes a largely managerialist approach, that its vision is unambitious, that recent developments (e.g. the likelihood that large numbers of

potential students will be lost to emigration) are not factored in, that there is an insufficient emphasis on the potential of learning technologies and that the evidence base for the conclusions reached is insufficiently solid.

6.1.3 Other points raised in discussion included the following:

- some recent initiatives in the University have anticipated some of the recommendations in the report, and their importance is thereby underlined: examples would include the identification of the graduate attributes, the ongoing work to get information on, and enhance, the student experience, and teaching quality evaluation and enhancement
- there are references in the report to private provision of higher education, including the availability of funding for private colleges in respect of certain activities; this carries implications for the University and the sector as a whole
- some of the recommendations, especially those relating to staff productivity, might usefully be read in the context of media projection of how academic staff spend their time
- many of the recommendations, including those on mission differentiation and funding, carry potentially negative implications depending on how they are implemented.

6.1.4 The Chair emphasised the need for proactive engagement with the report and its implications and the potential for the University to contribute in a positive manner to the strategic dialogue with higher education institutions that is envisaged in the report. He noted that ongoing agile strategic planning, based on timely and accessible information, would be essential to maximise the University's potential for development in the coming years. He noted too that there would be ongoing communication on the issues raised by the report with all stakeholders including senior management, Heads of School and senior staff in the linked colleges.

6.2 In respect of staffing issues, the Chair noted the following:

- an executive search process is under way in respect of the post of Vice-President for Research
- the selection process is under way in respect of the posts of Vice-President for External and Strategic Affairs and Director of Finance
- there will be a number of changes to the composition of senior management in the coming months, including the changes to be brought about by the above two initiatives
- the EOLAS group has been reorganised with clear reporting lines in place together with organisational support from relevant units
- Mr Eamonn Cuggy is acting Director of Finance
- a Risk Manager, Mr Jim Canavan, has been appointed on an interim basis (in this connection, the Chair mentioned that the initial focus of the Risk Management process is on the key areas of student retention and income optimisation).

- 6.3** Discussions are continuing within the four working groups (in the areas of education, research, shared services and internationalisation) established as a result of the ongoing dialogue with the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. Proposals from these working groups will be presented for consideration by the Senior Management Groups of the respective institutions on 1 March 2011. Following this, the respective Presidents will meet jointly with the Chairs of the Governing Authorities (or equivalent bodies) of the institutions to discuss the proposed next steps in the process. In the evaluation of the proposals, the emphasis will be on identifying potential for achieving enhanced delivery on the basis of the three institutions working together than would be possible if each were working on an independent basis.
- 6.4** Dialogue is continuing with Whitehall College of Further Education and Ballyfermot College of Further Education with a view to exploring further opportunities for collaboration. Discussions are also in progress with Dundalk Institute of Technology, and this is consistent with the emphasis on regional co-operation in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*.
- 6.5** Work is continuing to build on the opportunities for collaboration in teaching and research with Indian universities, with a DCU delegation having recently visited India and another visit scheduled for April 2011.

7. Integration of teaching and research

- 7.1** Noted that proposals on this issue had been discussed by the Education Committee and that the EC had also received summaries of the range of relevant activities being undertaken in Faculties. Additionally, Ms Morag Munro, Acting Head of the Learning Innovation Unit, and Dr Declan Raftery, Director of Research Support Services, are working on other initiatives, including the development of a web-based resource to support the integration of teaching and research. Discussions have also been initiated about the possibility of integrating the President's Award for Teaching and Learning and the President's Award for Research. Noted that it would be essential for the University to maintain competitive advantage in respect of the integration of teaching and research and that the importance of maintaining a multidisciplinary focus in respect of teaching and research had been emphasised at the most recent meeting of the board of the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance.
- 7.2** Arising from the reference to President's Awards, the Chair noted that he intended to introduce a new award for Innovation. There will be two award categories, one for academic staff and one for non-academic staff.

C: Items for formal approval/noting

8. Matters from the University Standards Committee and the Education Committee

Approved.

9. Validation recommendation: Master of Teaching

Approved.

10. Faculty Awards Boards: recommendations for March 2011 conferring

Approved.

11. Progression and Awards Boards: recommendations for March 2011 conferring

Noted that, as the Progression and Awards Boards were still in progress, the recommendations would be made available to the Council electronically on Monday 14 February 2011.

12. Any other business

Date of next meeting:

**Wednesday 13 April 2010
2.00 p.m. in AG01**

Signed: _____
President

Date: _____