

## ACADEMIC COUNCIL

### MINUTES

14 December 2011

2.00-4.00 p.m. in AG01

#### PRESENT:

M Ali  
S Blott  
O Bree  
J Bruen  
J Bruton  
C Byrne  
P J Byrne  
J Carroll  
E Clancy  
M Clynes  
E Connolly  
J Connolly  
P Cummins  
E Cunningham  
T Dalzell  
R Devery  
J Doyle  
C Fagan  
I Farragher  
Y Gao  
E Guilfoyle

S Hashmi  
G Hughes  
J Hughes  
M Humphrys  
P James  
B Kelly  
D Kenny  
M Kirwan  
J Lalor  
C Long  
L Looney  
C Mac an Bhaird  
B MacCraith (President)  
L McDermott (Secretary)  
C McGivern  
P McMorrow  
C Mac Murchaidh  
M Molony  
G Moore  
P Moore

A Morrissey  
M Nic Giolla Mhichíl  
S O'Brien  
R O'Connor  
C Ó Cuinn  
G O'Donoghue  
P Ó Flatharta  
J O'Higgins-Norman  
E O'Riordan  
M Roantree  
R Sadleir  
A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)  
D Sinclair  
A Sinnott  
M Slowey  
A Stover  
R Tobin  
G Warrington  
S Wickham  
C Woods

#### APOLOGIES:

L Barry  
P Brereton  
B Casey  
M Clynes

D Ging  
S Ingle  
P Kinsella  
S Knowlton

C McGroary  
K Moran  
N Murphy  
P O'Byrne

J Costello	J Lynch	C O’Gorman
J Dowling	B McConalogue	J O’Hara
O Finlayson	C McDonagh	R O’Kennedy
B Flood	P McDonagh	A Pearson-Evans
P Flood	E McGlynn	P Sheehan
A Foley	A McGrady	P Willis

**1. Adoption of agenda**

The agenda was adopted.

**A: Minutes and related issues**

**2. Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 12 October 2011**

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the President.

**3. Matters arising**

- 3.1** Noted that the proposals on dealing with plagiarism which had been made to Council at its meeting of 27 June 2011 were the subject of discussion with the Chair of the Disciplinary Committee. (Item 3.6)
- 3.2** The President requested the members of Council to let him know what they would consider the most effective means of communication with them, and with University staff generally. He noted that discussions on intra-University communications were under way with the Director of Communications and Marketing. He emphasised the importance of regular dialogue and exchange of ideas with the University community, particularly in view of the challenges currently faced by the higher education sector. (Item 5.7)
- 3.3** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that a number of issues required discussion between the higher education providers of teacher education and the Teaching Council and that, from the perspective of DCU and its linked colleges, the fact that DCU chairs the IUA and its constituent groups in 2012 would be helpful in this regard. Among the issues is a very recent e-mail from the Council requesting feedback from the higher education sector on its draft curricular requirements for prospective post-primary teachers. The Deputy President/Registrar expressed appreciation to the members of the

working group which is in the process of drawing up recommendations as to the most fruitful approaches to dialogue with the Teaching Council, and noted that the issues relating to the Council were likely to be adverted to regularly at Academic Council meetings for the remainder of 2011/12. (Item 11)

**4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 7 September 2011 and 5 October 2011**

Approved. Noted, however, that while the Education Committee, at its meeting of 7 September 2011, had understood that the Memorandum of Understanding in respect of the MSc in Bioprocess Engineering had been signed by all relevant parties (Item 3.13 of the minutes refers), this was actually not the case at the time. The MoU has since been signed by all parties.

**5. Minutes of the meeting of the University Standards Committee of 5 September 2011**

Approved. Noted, with respect to Item 7.1, that the aim of the working group which is considering Marks and Standards is not to make recommendations for substantive changes to them but rather to ensure that they are clear and consistent throughout. Agreed, none the less, that consideration would be given to a query on Marks and Standards which had been raised by the Appeals Board.

**5.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 8 September 2011**

Approved.

**5.2 Proposed footnote to Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis**

Approved.

**B: Policy and strategy issues**

**6. President's report**

- 6.1** With respect to the implementation of the *Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, the President noted that a number of consultation documents had been made available through the HEA. Additionally, a 'Landscape Paper', mapping out the overall higher education system and its needs, is expected to be published in January/February 2012. The request will then be for each higher education institution to articulate, in the first half of 2012, its positioning with respect to the landscape in terms of mission and strategic focus.
- 6.2** Allied to the above are the ongoing bilateral and multilateral discussions in respect of the University's linked colleges and the ways in which they and the University can best work together to enhance co-operation in this region and make the widest possible range of opportunities available to students.
- 6.3** Detailed dialogue is ongoing with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, with an intention to develop a set of initiatives over the coming months. The focus will be on enhancing existing collaboration as well as developing new initiatives which are likely to be enabled and enhanced by having the three institutions work together. It is likely that a subordinate jointly-owned entity will be established to co-ordinate the initiatives. The members of Council will be fully briefed on ongoing developments.
- 6.4** The full implications of the recent Budget (5 and 6 December 2011) for higher education are becoming apparent. It is already clear that the unit of investment per student is significantly lower (almost 20%) in 2011/12 than it was in 2009/10. There is concern also about the elimination of the maintenance grants for postgraduate students, on the grounds of likely hardship, and inability to continue studies, on the part of socio-economically disadvantaged students, and also because of the threat the elimination of the grants would pose to budgetary sustainability across the higher education sector.
- 6.5** DCU is one of only three universities to have increased its CAO acceptances in 2011 over 2010, and in fact had the highest increase across the sector. The President thanked the members of Council for their work in contributing to this positive outcome.
- 6.6** The President expressed sincere appreciation, on behalf of Council, to the outgoing Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Professor Eithne Guilfoyle, for the very significant contribution she had made to the work of Council during her term of office. This appreciation was reiterated by the Deputy President/Registrar. Good wishes were extended to Professor Guilfoyle for her future endeavours.

## **7. Teaching Quality Evaluation and Enhancement**

- 7.1** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the proposals on this matter had been the subject of very significant engagement on the part of the Faculties and Oscail, and expressed appreciation to all concerned. The volume of feedback received had led to the setting up, by the Education Committee, of a small, short-life working group, chaired by Professor John Costello, which was charged with making recommendations based on it. These recommendations will be made available to Council for consideration at its meeting of 8 February 2012.
- 7.2** In response to a query, the Deputy President/Registrar noted that it was possible that observation of teaching might have a role to play in terms of future procedures with regard to teaching quality evaluation and enhancement.

## **8. Academic Calendar 2012/13**

- 8.1** The Deputy President summarised recent developments with regard to the calendar: an alternative calendar, incorporating reduced time periods for examination sessions and mandatory reading weeks, had been devised and, on the basis of it, a ‘dummy’ examination timetable had been run by the Registry, using real student data. The result of this exercise indicated that the alternative calendar would necessitate examinations on consecutive days, and more than one examination per day, for a majority of students, including final-year students. While these kinds of situations are not unusual elsewhere, there is no recent tradition of them in DCU.
- 8.2** On the basis of the recommendation by the Education Committee to Council, the standard, as distinct from the proposed alternative, calendar for 2012/13 was approved; the approval includes confirmation of Monday 1 and Tuesday 2 July 2013 as post-examination consultation days. The EC had noted that for two Faculties, the Faculty of Engineering and Computing and the Faculty of Science and Health, mandatory reading weeks would be unworkable, and had also agreed that making incremental changes to the timetable would be undesirable pending decisions on more fundamental changes (see Item 8.3 below). On the issue of consultation days, it was agreed that the fitness for purpose of Monday and Tuesday, as distinct from other days of the week, would be monitored.
- 8.3** It was noted that, for strategic reasons and in particular because of the possibility that the University might deem it necessary to adapt its procedures to meet the needs of incoming international students, consideration might need to be given to making radical changes to the academic calendar at a date in the foreseeable future.

Mr Ó Cuinn is to make a presentation on relevant issues to the Heads' and Deans' meeting of 19 January 2012. It was noted too that consideration might need to be given to having a centralised timetable for the University which could be publicised well in advance.

- 8.4** It was agreed that Dr Looney would convene a working group to make recommendations in respect of a number of issues including the lengths of time accorded to different groups of taught Master's students to complete their dissertations and how these lengths of time differ from those available to counterpart students in mainland Europe. The importance of balancing Bologna compliance with the realities of the marketplace in terms of taught postgraduate programmes was noted.

## **9. University entry/admissions options**

- 9.1** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that a subgroup of the IUA Registrars had been charged with developing recommendations in respect of the application/admissions system to higher education. This subgroup is in dialogue with other stakeholders such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Institutes of Technology Ireland and the State Examinations Commission, and there is a commitment to maintaining a common system as well as the principles (e.g. transparency and impartiality) which have underpinned the CAO system since its establishment.

- 9.2** In the ensuing discussion, the following were noted:
- there are varying opinions as to whether or not the current system promotes positive educational values and whether or not it distorts other elements of the educational system (the Deputy President/Registrar undertook to mention these points to the working group to be set up – see Item 9.3 below)
  - consideration may need to be given to having fewer denominated degree programmes in the University; however, cognisance will also need to be taken of the particular, and largely successful, history that the University has had with such programmes (for this reason it may be desirable to consider maintaining both common-entry and designated programmes in the same subject areas)
  - as it is expected that demand for higher education places will continue to outstrip supply, there will continue to be a need for some kind of selection system
  - it is likely that minimum entry requirements, if they are adjusted, will be adjusted upwards rather than downwards because, being low at present, they may not indicate to applicants the level of achievement that is actually expected of them in higher education
  - proposals that have been made in the higher education sector to move to a system of block entry, where first-year students would all take the same broad range of subjects per discipline, are likely to be unworkable

- in terms of programme entry requirements, account will need to be taken of the Teaching Council regulations, in terms of Leaving Certificate subjects, about eligibility for post-primary teaching; these regulations remain to be agreed (see Item 3.3 above).

**9.3** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that she intended to set up a DCU working group to make recommendations on the issues by the end of the academic year 2011/12. The membership of this group is to include the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning, the Student Enrolment Manager, a representative of Student Support and Development and a minimum of two Programme Chairs from each Faculty; the last-named group would need to include individuals with experience of managing undergraduate programmes and familiarity with the suite of undergraduate offerings in their Faculties, and there would also need to be expertise in terms of managing common-entry programmes and designated programmes with very particular entry requirements. It was also suggested that the working group should include a person familiar with the issues affecting mature candidates and a representative of Access and Student Recruitment. The group will need to meet before 20 January 2012 to take account of the timing of the next meeting of the IUA Registrars. The Deputy President/Registrar requested the Deans of Faculty to give consideration to whom they might wish to nominate as Programme Chairs, and also requested interested Chairs to contact her or Ms McDermott.

**C: Items for formal approval/noting**

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

Approved. Two decisions taken on behalf of Council by means of Chair's action, and the completion of the accreditation process for the proposed Master of Teaching programme in St Patrick's College, were noted.

**11. Validation report: LLM in International Legal Studies**

Approved.

**12. Report from Winter 2011 Examinations/Progression and Awards Boards**

Approved.

**13. Report from Appeals Board: DCU**

Noted.

**14. Report from the Disciplinary Committee**

Noted.

**15. Report from the Disciplinary Appeals Committee**

Noted.

**16. Report from the Appeals Board: St Patrick's College**

Noted.

**17. Any other business**

None.

**Date of next meeting:**

**Wednesday 8 February 2012  
2.00 p.m. in AG01**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
President

Date: \_\_\_\_\_