

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday 8 April 2009

2.00-3.15 p.m. in AG01

PRESENT:

S Anglim
F Blin
S Blott
O Bree
C Brennan
P Brereton
J Carroll
B Casey
J Connolly
J Costello
J Dowling
J Doyle
H Duncan
M Farren
B Flood
P Flood
J Geraghty
M Henry
C Holland
M Hopkins
L Horan

G Hughes
J Hughes
S Hurley
S Ingle
M Irwin-Bannon
S Knowlton
H Lechleiter
C Loscher
C Mac an Bhaird
L McDermott (Secretary)
C McDonagh
Á McGillicuddy
C McGonagle
A McGrady
P McNamara
P Meleady
A Morrissey
J Morris
M Munro
B Murphy

G Murphy
N Murphy
M Nic Giolla Mhichíl
P O'Byrne
P Ó Flatharta
M Parkinson
P Preston
A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)
P Sheehan
M Shine Thompson
D Sinclair
P Smith
M Smyth
J Stokes
A Stover
R Tobin
F von Prondzynski (Chair)
A Wickham
S Wickham
J Williams

APOLOGIES:

C Bohan
J Bruton
E Buffet
E Conway
P Donnelly
T Draper
N Gathergood

L Hourihane
B Leavy
B Le Juez
T Leufer
B McConalogue
P McMorrow
C Mac Murchaidh

R Meehan
A-G Olabi
B Pierce
A Sinnott
R Verbruggen
P Willis

IN ATTENDANCE:

G Barry

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the transfer of Item 11 from Section C to Section B and the inclusion of one submission under Item 14.

A: Minutes and related issues**2. Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Council of 11 February 2009**

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

3.1 The Chair noted that an appointment to the post of Vice-President for Learning Innovation had been made and that an announcement about this would issue shortly. (Item 3.1)

3.2 It was noted that the new arrangements for validation were being monitored and would be modified if experience indicated that this would be desirable. (Item 3.2)

3.3 It was noted that the names of the Academic Council members of the search committee for a new President of the university from mid 2010 had been notified to the Council. (Item 3.3)

3.4 It was noted that SIF funding for a management information system would not be available. (Item 3.4)

3.5 The Chair noted that the formal launch of the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance would take place in late April 2009 and that, while developments in the external environment precluded collaborative initiatives on the scale that had originally been envisaged, the university remained committed to advancing, in co-operation with partner institutions, the Enhancement of Learning and Graduate Education strands for which funding had been made available. It is not likely, however, that any further SIF funding will be available in the foreseeable future. (Item 3.4)

3.6 It was noted that discussions about the ITS system were ongoing in the context of planning for the upgrade to the latest version. (Item 3.5)

- 3.7 It was noted that proposals on programme review would be made to the 6 May 2009 meeting of the Education Committee. (Item 4)
- 3.8 The Chair noted that the proposed meetings for staff to discuss the challenges posed by the difficult economic climate had been postponed so as to ensure that the rapid changes in the external environment could be absorbed and factored into the discussions at such meetings. (Item 8.3)
- 3.9 It was noted that the Progression and Awards Boards recommendations for March 2009 conferring had been made available electronically to the members of the Council on 13 February 2009. (Item 11)

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 14 January 2009 and 4 February 2009

Noted.

5. President's report

- 5.1 The Chair outlined a number of the challenges facing higher education at present, noting the importance of adopting an outlook that was at once positive and prudent and of maintaining a balanced approach to media coverage of the issues.
- 5.2 An IUA working group has been set up to make recommendations on subject provision across the university sector. The DCU representatives on this group are Professor Anne Scott and Mr Martin Conry.
- 5.3 The Chair emphasised the importance of maintaining positive relationships with all other higher education institutions including, though not confined to, those currently involved with DCU in significant collaborative activities such as the submission of the bid for funding under PRTL I Cycle 5.
- 5.4 It is not yet known what developments will take place with regard to the possible reintroduction of student fees, but an announcement on the matter is expected soon.
- 5.5 The implications of the current adverse economic climate for staff recruitment and related issues will become clearer following a meeting between HEA representatives and Presidents and Human Resource Directors of the universities, to be held shortly.
- 5.6 The Chair invited the members of the Council to contact him if they wished to make observations or submit proposals in relation to the above matters.

B: Policy and strategy issues**6. Strategic Plan 2009-2011: updated information**

The Chair noted that the component strategic plans to accompany the main plan were being finalised, that it was intended to launch the plan in June 2009 and that the opportunity would be taken at the launch to highlight positive developments in the university with effect from 2009/10.

7. Presentation on AFI implementation timeline**7.1** Professor Martin Henry, Academic Director of the Academic Framework for Innovation, noted the following in the course of his presentation:

- award descriptors have been rewritten in terms of learning outcomes
- module descriptors are to be similarly rewritten in May/June 2009 with the assistance of software just purchased
- revised *Marks and Standards* are under consideration in Faculties
- longer-term *Marks and Standards* are to be developed to meet the needs of AFI as it develops more fully
- infrastructural and funding issues are to be examined in the context of this further development
- the wider context surrounding AFI, including the underlying educational values which might inform its further development, would benefit from substantial discussion at a future meeting of the Council.

7.2 The following issues arose in the ensuing discussion:

- to ensure that the commitment to innovation inherent in AFI is appropriately foregrounded, consideration might be given to requesting module co-ordinators to outline, in module descriptors, the specifically innovative nature of their approach to delivering modules
- it will be important to continue to ascertain students' needs in terms of flexibility of module provision, particularly in view of the rapidly changing external environment
- a range of options in terms of flexible provision – such as evening and Summer delivery of modules – should be considered with a view to maximising resources
- it will be important to ensure concurrent discussion of the range of issues relating to AFI development.

7.3 The Chair thanked Professor Henry for his presentation, noting that he would discuss further with him the possibility of having substantial discussion on the issues at a Council meeting.

8. Proposals on the academic calendar with effect from 2010/11

Approved.

11. Outcome of exercise conducted in Faculties in relation to aspects of Marks and Standards

Approved with the exception of the outcome relating to undergraduate programmes in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing; procedures with regard to these programmes will be agreed at a meeting to be chaired by the Deputy President/Registrar in the week beginning 13 April 2009 and will be conveyed electronically to the members of the Council with a request for approval. Noted that an issue relating to undergraduate programmes in the School of Physical Sciences had been clarified and that the clarification would be conveyed electronically to the members of the Council. (*Note: this item was transferred from Section C to Section B*)

C: Items for formal approval/noting**9. Validation recommendations:**

- **BA (Hons) in Theology and Lifelong Education**
- **BSc (Hons) in Psychology**

Approved.

10. DCU award descriptors for the National Framework of Qualifications

Approved.

12. Progression and Awards Boards recommendations for exchange students and study abroad students

Approved.

13. Report from the Disciplinary Appeals Committee

Noted.

14. Any other business

The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the last meeting of the Academic Council for 2008/09, that of 29 June 2009, was intended to allow for formal approval of Progression and Awards Boards recommendations and of any outstanding matters from earlier in the academic year, rather than discussion of substantive issues. She therefore requested the members of the Council to ensure that any substantive issues they might wish the Council to address in 2008/09 were included on the agenda for the meeting of 10 June 2009.

Date of next meeting:

<p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday 10 June 2009 2.00 p.m. in AG01</p>

Signed: _____
President

Date: _____