

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday 9 June 2010

2.00-4.05 p.m. in AG01

PRESENT:

T Brady	H Lechleiter	R O'Kennedy
O Bree	C Long	A-G Olabi
C Brennan	L Looney	E O'Riordan
P Brereton	J Lynch	M Parkinson
J Burzlaff	B McConalogue	A Pearson-Evans
J Costello	L McDermott (Secretary)	D Raftery
B Daly	C McDonagh	A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)
T Draper	A McGrady	M Scott
N Gathergood	J McKenna	M Shine Thompson
E Guilfoyle	J McManis	M Slowey
P James	A Moran	P Smith
S Hashmi	J-P Mosnier	M Smyth
C Holland	P McMorrow	F von Prondzynski (Chair)
L Hourihane	C Mac Murchaidh	M Ward
G Hughes	A Morrissey	A Wickham
S Ingle	J Morris	S Wickham
M Irwin-Bannon	M Munro	J Williams
B Kelly	G Murphy	P Young
S Knowlton	J Murphy	C Woods
A Leahy	M Nic Giolla Mhichíl	

APOLOGIES:

S-J Belton	B Flood	P Meleady
F Blin	P Flood	K Moran
C Bohan	T Hogan	C Nic Pháidín
D Brabazon	M Kelly	P O'Byrne
J Bruton	E Kennedy	D O'Gorman
J Carroll	T Leufer	P Sheehan
B Casey	C Loscher	A Sinnott
E Conway	C Mac an Bhaird	A Stover

P Donnelly
J Dowling
O Finlayson

C McGonagle
P McNamara

R Tobin
A Way

IN ATTENDANCE:

C Byrne
M Long
I McGlynn
B Nolan

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the transfer of Item 10 from Section C to Section B and the replacement of the last document in Item 10, i.e. the recommendations on the appointment of external examiners (now deferred to the meeting of 13 October 2010), by a memorandum relating to Marks and Standards.

A: Minutes and related issues

2. Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Council of 14 April 2010

The minutes were confirmed subject to the addition of the name of M Kelly to the list of those who had submitted apologies, the correction of a typographical error to make the first word of the third sentence in Item 3.1 read 'When', and the deletion of the words 'particularly for staff who teach' at the end of Item 9.1.

They were then signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1** Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Director of Registry, noted that the new Calculate programme to support Marks and Standards had gone live and that, in the event that any difficulties became apparent, support from ITS would be available within a short timeframe. Discussions about some complex issues not covered under the first phase of the development of the programme are in progress with a view to determining the extent to which a second phase may be necessary. (Item 3.1)

- 3.2** The Chair noted that it was possible the outcome of submissions for funding under PRTL 5 would be made known soon, these submissions now having been reviewed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation which has taken over responsibility for research at 4th level from the Department of Education and Skills (see Item 7.4 below). (Item 6.1)
- 3.3** The Chair noted that he and his counterparts in the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland had briefed the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills, Ms Mary Coughlan, and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, Mr Batt O’Keeffe, about the ongoing discussions between the three institutions. He also noted that the Translational Research Hub developed by the three institutions would be launched by An Taoiseach, Mr Brian Cowen, on a date to be announced shortly. (Item 6.2)
- 3.4** The Chair noted that the report from the Strategic Review of Higher Education was due to be published shortly and that the Chair of the Review Group, Dr Colin Hunt, would speak at the conference to be held in the university on 15 and 16 June 2010, *Re-Inventing the University – Creating a New Vision*, as would Professor John Hegarty, Provost of Trinity College Dublin and a member of the Review Group, and Ms Mary Coughlan. He encouraged the members of the Council to participate in the conference. (Item 6.3)
- 3.5** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that she, Ms McMorrow and the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education would discuss a number of issues relating to the academic calendar with a view to determining the extent to which it might be desirable to recommend any changes to the Academic Council. The Deputy President/Registrar noted that she would meet with the Director of Registry, Ms Phylomena McMorrow, to review the various issues raised by the working group as needing attention prior to further consideration of a new university calendar. She and Ms McMorrow will identify options for tightening up items such as the examination schedule and the possibilities for standardization of reading week. Suggestions and options will then be explored with interested parties, including the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education, with a view to determining the extent to which it might be desirable to recommend any changes to the Academic Council. (Item 7)

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 3 March, 7 April and 5 May 2010

Approved. The Chair noted that a number of issues discussed by the EC in the context of its goals for 2009/10 would be submitted for the consideration of the Academic Council in 2010/11. These would include the possible desired attributes of DCU graduates, the current and projected profile of the DCU student population, and patterns of student retention and progression. This last item will feature on the agenda

of the Council for its meeting of 9 February 2011, once a full set of data for 2009/10 and the first Semester of 2010/11 is available.

5. Minutes of the meeting of the University Standards Committee of 4 February 2010

Approved.

5.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 14 January 2010

Approved.

6. President's report

6.1 The Chair outlined the increasingly challenging financial situation facing universities, noting that, while DCU did not have a deficit to clear as did some other institutions, it would not benefit from any favourable treatment as a result of having maintained balanced books. The funding issue will form a major item on the agenda of the forthcoming meeting of IUA Presidents. It may prove necessary for the university sector to be more explicit than has hitherto been the case about the difficulties inherent in managing universities with reducing funding (including reduced research funding), especially in an environment in which higher students intakes are encouraged and expected.

6.2 The Chair noted that the Strategic Plan 2010-12 would be launched by the President, Her Excellency Mary McAleese, on 22 June 2010, and encouraged the members of the Council to attend the ceremony. He also noted that the European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Ms Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, would visit the university to deliver an address in Autumn 2010.

B: Policy and strategy issues

7. Report from the Research Committee

7.1 Dr Declan Raftery, Director of Research Support Services, summarised the report, noting in particular the challenges posed by the significant reduction in government funding, amounting to a 25% drop relative to the figure in 2008 and including a sharp decrease in funding available for disbursement by Science Foundation Ireland. The reduced success rates of bids for research funding, and the recent loss of a significant number of postdoctoral researchers from DCU, were noted as being adverse

consequences of the current difficulties. It is unlikely that the situation will improve in the foreseeable future. One consequence of this is that there will have to be an increased reliance on EU funding.

- 7.2** In the discussion on the definition of ‘research active’, Dr Raftery noted that it did not represent an exhaustive list of all possible contributions to research and that it would be subject to ongoing review – including possible modifications on a per-Faculty basis - in the light of dialogue with Faculties and Schools and, to the extent possible, with the support of enhanced administrative systems. He described the purpose of the definition as enabling the university to make an overview of research activity available as and when required.
- 7.3** The Chair undertook to raise, in an appropriate forum, the issue of recognition of research in areas of the university that are not attached to Faculties.
- 7.4** A discussion took place about the possible future implications of the recent transfer of responsibility for research from the Department of Education and Skills to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (see Item 3.2 above) as well as the extent to which the focus of those responsible for the disbursement of research funding might have shifted from the longer to the more immediate term in respect of easily measurable results.
- 7.5** The Chair noted that he and the other university Presidents were due to meet the Taoiseach shortly to discuss research funding.
- 7.6** Professor Gary Murphy, Director of Graduate Research, noted that the Daniel O’Hare research scholarships would be advertised shortly.
- 7.7** It was agreed that a list of the members of the Research Advisory Panel would be made available to the Council.

8. Presentation on INTRA

- 8.1** Ms Maeve Long, Head of INTRA, outlined the three principal reasons for recent difficulties in placing students: the rapidly deteriorating economic situation from 2008 onwards; a reluctance on the part of some employers to engage students with relatively weak examination results; a reluctance on the part of some employers to engage students from outside the European Economic Area notwithstanding the fact that mechanisms exist to allow employers to do this while still complying with legislation. She noted that, notwithstanding the difficulties, 91% of students had been placed in 2008/09 (although earnings had fallen and many employers paid the minimum wage only). The availability of placements had improved somewhat in recent months also.

- 8.2** It was agreed that the report on INTRA 2008/09 would be amended as follows: in the summary at the beginning, the last sentence of paragraph four is to be amended to make it clear that it is not the case that there are large numbers of students on each degree programme with weak academic records; in the section relating to the BSc in Applied Physics, the reference to student participation is to be amended to make it clear that 7 out of 18 students chose to participate in INTRA.
- 8.3** It was noted that English-language classes are provided, in certain circumstances, to students who are not native speakers, though uptake has tended to be disappointing; meanwhile, students' and employers' perceptions of the level of achievement in English necessary to perform adequately in a role can differ. The Chair undertook to raise these issues in the context of discussions about the internationalisation strategy.
- 8.4** The Chair undertook also to discuss the placement problems relating to INTRA further with Ms Long and then to raise them at Executive with a view to identifying solutions. The Deputy President/Registrar indicated that this would be very helpful as the Education Committee also intended to review elements of INTRA as part of its work plan for the coming academic year.
- 8.5** The Chair expressed appreciation to Ms Long and her colleagues, on behalf of the Council, for their significant work in ensuring that students and employers benefit to the maximum extent possible from the existence of work placements. Ms Long, in her turn, acknowledged the very high level of support given to the INTRA endeavour by Council members and academic staff more generally.

9. Consideration of the issue of awarding bonus points for Higher Level Leaving Certificate Mathematics

- 9.1** The proposals contained in the recommendations of the Working Group on Bonus Points (May/June 2010) were approved.
- 9.2** It was agreed that the proposal to award bonus points for Leaving Certificate Higher Level Mathematics should not be regarded as a complete solution to the problem of low engagement with, and attainment in, Mathematics at national level. Rather it is a mechanism conceived of as being time limited and designed to work in tandem with other approaches to bring about a significant improvement in the situation. The most important of these approaches, by far, is recognised as being governmental support for the Project Maths initiative, to the extent that university approval of bonus points is conditional on such governmental support. An improved situation, in the context of Mathematics, may be construed in a broad sense as including not only an increase in take-up at Higher Level in the Leaving Certificate but also an increase in aspiration towards high achievement in Mathematics at all levels of education from primary upwards with a view to increasing mathematical literacy nationally and thereby helping

to contribute to future prosperity. The initiation of Project Maths is all the more noteworthy in view of the relative absence of other initiatives since the publication of the report of the Task Force on the Physical Sciences in 2002.

- 9.3** It was noted that the focus of the national discussion on the bonus points issue had moved somewhat, from an emphasis some years ago on enabling students to enter programmes in science, technology and engineering to a broader emphasis now on raising achievement in Mathematics more generally. It was, however, pointed out that success in Higher Level Leaving Certificate Mathematics does in fact boost students' chances of entering STEM programmes and that therefore the awarding of bonus points for such success might well encourage a higher uptake of the subject at Higher Level from students interested in entering such programmes.
- 9.4** It was noted that the option, sometimes proposed, of holding an examination in Mathematics in the fifth year of second-level school, to enable students to pass Mathematics and thereby free them of the concerns associated with failing the Higher Level examination in the Leaving Certificate, had the disadvantage that increased numbers of students (those who passed the fifth-year examination and did not proceed to Higher Level Mathematics) would be likely to enter higher education not having engaged with Mathematics for many months and would thereby be disadvantaged. For this reason, the provision of a special Mathematics examination, following sixth year but separate from the Leaving Certificate, may be a preferable option.
- 9.5** It was noted that the recommendations of the Working Group on the numbers of bonus points to be offered per grade at Leaving Certificate Higher Level had been established on the basis of what would be likely to provide the greatest level of equity for students relative to achievement in other Higher Level subjects and in Mathematics at Ordinary Level.

10. Matters from the University Standards Committee and the Education Committee, including policies and recommendations as follows:

10.1 Revised policy on plagiarism

Approved.

10.2 Policy on leave of absence

Approved.

10.3 Recommendations on shared teaching (Levels 8/9)

Agreed to discuss these recommendations at the meeting of 13 October 2010.

10.4 Memorandum on Marks and Standards

- 10.4.1** Noted that, in a number of programmes, assignments may be used for formative rather than summative purposes. The Deputy President/Registrar noted, however, that where marks are attached to assignments in line with the academic structure it is important for members of Programme Boards to be aware of the outcomes of this in terms of module marks and overall grades as evident from the broadsheet of results.
- 10.4.2** Noted that the memorandum made provision, in certain circumstances and in relation to the June and September 2010 Progression and Awards Boards, for a resit examination to be marked out of 100% even if this was not the case at the first attempt. The Deputy President/Registrar invited members of Council to submit to her, or to Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Director of Registry, by the morning of 10 June 2010, any alternative wording that they considered might make this clearer in the memorandum than is currently the case. She undertook to advise the Academic Council of the outcome of this exercise within a short timeframe.
- 10.4.3** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that all decisions of Progression and Awards Boards in respect of examination marks should be made with appropriate regard both for the welfare of the students and for the maintenance of academic standards.
- 10.4.5** Noted that, while continuous assessment marks are not indicated on broadsheets at the present time, they are available to Progression and Awards Boards by means of the live link to the ITS system.
- 10.4.6** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the experience of using the new Marks and Standards which would be gleaned at the June and September 2010 Progression and Awards Boards would be communicated to Academic Council at its meeting of 13 October 2010.
- 10.4.7** Noted that, where plagiarism had occurred in relation to a piece of continuous assessment, a Programme Board could decide to award zero for the assessment, or for the module in its entirety, depending on circumstances and in line with university policy (see Item 10.1 above).

C: Items for formal approval/noting

11. Validation recommendations:

11.1 MA in Ecology and Religion

Approved.

11.2 MA in Sexuality Studies

Approved.

12. Accreditation recommendations:

12.1 BSc in Health Studies

Approved.

12.2 Graduate Certificate in Digital Marketing

Approved.

12.3 MSc in Organisational Change and Leadership Development

Approved.

12.4 MA in Ethics

Approved.

13. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting:

<p>Monday 28 June 2010 2.00 p.m. in AG01</p>

Signed: _____
President

Date: _____