

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday 9 December 2009

2.00-3.40 p.m. in AG01

PRESENT:

F Blin
S Blott
D Brabazon
O Bree
P Brereton
J Bruton
J Carroll
B Casey
J Costello
B Daly
D Fitzpatrick
J Geraghty
S Hashmi
M Henry
C Holland
T Holohan
Md S Hossain
G Hughes
M Irwin-Bannon
A Leahy

C Long
L Looney
C Loscher
C Mac an Bhaird
B McConalogue
L McDermott (Secretary)
C McDonagh
D McGann
A McGrady
J McKenna
K MacKeogh
A Moran
J-P Mosnier
P McMorrow
P McNamara
P Meleady
A Morrissey
M Munro
G Murphy

J Murphy
N Murphy
J Needham
A Neville
M Nic Giolla Mhichíl
D O’Gorman
M Parkinson
A Pearson-Evans
P Preston
J Quigley
A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)
D Sinclair
A Sinnott
P Smith
F von Prondzynski (Chair)
M Ward
A Wickham
S Wickham
P Young

APOLOGIES:

C Brennan
P Donnelly
J Dowling
T Draper
O Finlayson
B Flood

M Kelly
B Kelly
E Kennedy
S Knowlton
H Lechleiter
T Leufer

R O’Kennedy
E O’Riordan
B Pierce
M Shine Thompson
A Stover
R Tobin

P Flood
S Fox
L Hourihane
J Hughes

C McGonagle
C Mac Murchaidh
C Nic Pháidín
P O'Byrne

D Turley
J Williams
P Willis

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the transfer of Item 10 from Section C to Section B.

A: Minutes and related issues

2. Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Council of 14 October 2009

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1** The Chair noted that it was hoped an agreement could be reached soon between the universities and the HEA about the Employment Control Framework. Notwithstanding any agreement, it will be necessary to adopt a very prudent approach to filling vacant posts since there will be targets to be met in terms of reducing overall staff numbers. The Chair advised members of the Council to continue to seek advice from Budget Committee in advance of preparing to fill any post, and thanked the members of Budget Committee, and DCU staff generally, for the helpful and co-operative approach shown in relation to the matter of staffing over the past difficult months. (Item 3.1)
- 3.2** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that there had not been further developments to date in relation to the inter-institutional working group on subject provision. (Item 3.3)
- 3.3** The Chair noted that a meeting had been held on 16 November 2009 to afford all staff an opportunity to discuss current developments in higher education and that it had been very well attended. (Item 4.3)
- 3.4** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the finalised policy on due diligence was now available on the university website under 'Policies and Procedures'. (Item 7)

- 3.5** The Chair urged the members of the Council to ensure the fullest possible attendance at the February 2010 Progression and Awards Boards and said that he would raise the matter of attendance at PABs again prior to the June 2010 PABs. (Item 11)

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 9 September and 7 October 2009

- 4.1** Approved. The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the EC had now adopted a set of strategic goals for 2009/10, which included an emphasis on retention and progression issues (especially in relation to first-year undergraduate programmes) and on a system to provide a regular 'health check' for all programmes.

5. President's report

The Chair noted that, while detailed information would not be available until early 2010, it was very probable that the budget allocation for higher education would be significantly reduced this year. He reiterated his request to the members of the Council to take an appropriately cautious approach to spending and to make every effort to reduce costs as much as possible. It was noted that, while the proposed provision of 500 extra primary teacher education places was likely to have to be paid for from the higher education allocation, St Patrick's College had not to date been given any details about this proposal and indeed had seen the number of places on the Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary Teaching) programme reduced by two thirds for the 2010 intake.

B: Policy and strategy issues

6. Strategic implementation

- 6.1** The Chair noted that the Strategic Review of Higher Education, which had originally been due for publication in 2009, was now due for publication by the end of March 2010. The reason additional time was required was that the issues of student fees, and future funding for higher education more generally, had been added to the original brief of the review group. The Presidents of all the universities have by now had an opportunity to meet the review group.
- 6.2** The Chair noted that Dr Don Thornhill, formerly Chair of the HEA, had been appointed facilitator to the working group to discuss future co-operation between the university, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. While it would not now be possible, as had originally been hoped, to submit outline proposals to the Governing Authority meeting of 17 December 2009,

such proposals would none the less be submitted to Governing Authority early in 2010, and it would be desirable to afford the Academic Council an opportunity to discuss them in advance of this, either at the 10 February 2010 meeting or, if this proved likely to be too late, at a specially-convened meeting in January 2010. The Chair noted that two of the three institutions were undergoing significant change in that RCSI had just appointed a new Chief Executive Officer and DCU was in the process of appointing a new President. The possibility of any or all of the institutions changing their titles at a future date was discussed. Any institution which ceased to be affiliated to the National University of Ireland would have to change its name. The RCSI and DCU ‘brands’ are very well established, though the title ‘Dublin City University’ is not easily understood in some countries (because it appears to denote a community college rather than a university). Name changes would require legislation.

7. Revised proposals on the academic calendar

- 7.1** The first of the two proposed academic calendars for 2010/11, i.e. the version that is very similar to that in operation for 2009/10, was approved. It was noted that the following differences apply between the 2009/10 calendar and the calendar approved for 2010/11:
- in 2010/11, three additional days have been factored in, for the Summer and Autumn appeals process, between the closing date for lodging appeals and the meeting of the Appeals Board
 - in 2010, the Autumn Progression and Awards Boards will be timetabled over four days rather than, as hitherto, three
 - in 2010, graduation and (where applicable) reading week will fall in Week 6, not Week 7, of the year.
- 7.2** In the discussion about the academic calendar for 2011/12 onwards, the following points were made:
- it would be desirable to learn from the experience of other institutions
 - consideration might usefully be given to making minimal changes until the outcome of the discussions between the university, RCSI and NUIM (see 6.2 above) was known, and then, if appropriate, aligning the calendars of the three institutions
 - while there are positive aspects to the attempt to achieve alignment with international calendars, it should be noted that there is inconsistency internationally (even across Europe)
 - it will be important to ensure that study weeks, where available, are co-ordinated across programmes that share facilities (e.g. laboratory facilities)
 - the issue of ensuring an appropriate period of research time for academic staff between semesters is a very significant one

- significant changes to the calendar will require resources (which may need to be diverted from other tasks)
- the implications for the calendar of academic decisions made by the university will need to be discussed: for example, significant resit examination opportunities result in a more pressurised Summer for staff as well as students.

7.3 Agreed that any revised calendar should be underpinned by academic considerations, though it would be important to factor in administrative feasibility. Agreed that the working group should submit, to the 14 April 2010 meeting of the Council, a revised proposal outlining the academic arguments for, and against, substantial changes to the current calendar. Agreed to augment the membership of the working group by adding the following: a Programme Chair from each Faculty; one representative of Oscaill; one Associate Dean for Research; one Head of School; Professor Gary Murphy, Director of Graduate Research; Professor John Carroll, Chair of the Appeals Board.

7.4 The Chair thanked the members of the original working group for their contribution on this issue to date.

8. Report on the implementation of ITS Version 14

8.1 Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Director of Registry, noted that ITS Version 14 had gone live on 30 November 2009, with the objectives of the upgrade being both to support the carrying out of core business and to facilitate ongoing strategic development. In tandem with the preparation for Version 14, a new examination timetabling system (in effect, a module of the lecture timetabling system, Syllabus Plus) had been purchased and used to prepare the timetable for the Semester 1 examinations in 2009/10. A major ongoing project in respect of Version 14 relates to the examination calculate programme, for which a new rules-based system is being developed with the objective of supporting the new university Marks and Standards (in force since 28 September 2009). The revised calculate programme will be implemented by the end of January 2010, and some other necessary system changes will also be implemented early in 2010.

8.2 Ms Barbara McConalogue, Director of Information Systems and Services, noted a number of technical developments which would, *inter alia*, support the implementation of Version 14: the introduction of the latest version of Oracle had eliminated the need for nightly manual back-ups of ITS data; while important processes such as the publication of examination results would remain unaffected, security of data would be much enhanced and it would henceforth be possible to implement measures to increase such security much more effectively than hitherto.

- 8.3** A number of other developments were also noted. ISS, in collaboration with the Public Affairs and Media Relations Office, will be making available a content management system which will enable Schools and Units to manage their online data in a much more flexible way than has been possible to date; Ms McConalogue undertook to ascertain the likely date the system would be made available and make this known to Professor Paschal Preston (who had inquired about this) and all other interested parties. A working group, chaired by Ms Jennifer Bruton, has been set up to make recommendations on the implementation of the policy on staff access to student data (which has already been approved by Executive). There is increased activity in relation to gathering student opinions about programmes to inform a range of developments, including programme review; in this connection, it was confirmed that, following the implementation of Version 14, staff would continue to have access to Discoverer to formulate their own questions.
- 8.4** It was noted that, once the most urgent issues relating to Version 14, such as ensuring its functionality with respect to the new Marks and Standards, had been addressed satisfactorily, attention would be devoted to other important issues such as enhancing the user-friendliness of broadsheets. The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the priority for the university was to ensure the integrity of all systems, including the examination system, and that it would be essential to devote as much time and effort to this priority as was necessary before other matters could be addressed.

10. Validation recommendations

10.1 Graduate Diploma/MSc in Materials Engineering

Approved.

10.2 Science Studies as a subject on the BA and BEd programmes in St Patrick's College

Approved. Noted that, in line with one of the recommendations of the Education Committee/Validation Subgroup, the development of the proposal would involve close collaboration with DCU academic staff, particularly in the Schools of Physical Sciences and Chemical Sciences, and the existing collaborative relationships within CASTeL would be utilised to facilitate this.

10.3 BSc (Hons) in Horticulture

Approved.

C: Items for formal approval/noting

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

Approved.

11. Report from Winter 2009 examinations/Progression and Awards Boards

Approved.

12. Reports from Appeals Boards: St Patrick's College and Mater Dei Institute of Education

Noted.

13. Any other business

Noted that Professor Jenny Williams was now the professorial representative of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences on the Academic Promotions Committee, replacing Professor Helena Sheehan, who had retired.

Date of next meeting:

<p>Wednesday 10 February 2010 2.00 p.m. in AG01</p>
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Signed: _____
President

Date: _____