

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday 10 February 2010

2.00-3.00 p.m. in AG01

PRESENT:

F Blin	L Looney	J Needham
D Brabazon	J Lynch	M Nic Giolla Mhichíl
O Bree	C Mac an Bhaird	C Nic Pháidín
J Bruton	L McDermott (Secretary)	R O'Kennedy
J Carroll	C McDonagh	E O'Riordan
J Costello	D McGann	M Parkinson
M Cronin	C McGonagle	A Pearson-Evans
B Daly	A McGrady	P Preston
J Doyle	J McKenna	J Quigley
T Draper	J McManis	A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)
B Flood	A Moran	M Shine Thompson
S Fox	P McMorrow	M Smyth
J Geraghty	P Meleady	R Tobin
S Hashmi	A Morrissey	F von Prondzynski (Chair)
G Hughes	J Morris	M Ward
B Kelly	J Murphy	S Wickham
H Lechleiter	N Murphy	P Willis
C Long		

APOLOGIES:

C Brennan	L Hourihane	M Munro
P Brereton	M Irwin-Bannon	B Murphy
B Casey	D Jacobson	G Murphy
J Connolly	M Kelly	P O'Byrne
P Donnelly	A Leahy	B Pierce
J Dowling	T Leufer	A Sinnott
O Finlayson	B McConalogue	A Stover
D Fitzpatrick	K MacKeogh	A Way
P Flood	J-P Mosnier	J Williams
M Henry	C Mac Murchaidh	P Young
T Hogan	P McNamara	

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the transfer of Items 8 and 9 from Section C to Section B.

A: Minutes and related issues**2. Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Council of 9 December 2009**

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1** The Chair noted that a revised Employment Control Framework was now in operation which, while allowing higher education institutions somewhat more leeway in terms of advertising posts than had obtained under the original Framework, none the less constrained them very considerably by stipulating a 6% reduction in both staff numbers and salary costs over the calendar years 2009 and 2010, with the likelihood that stringency would also apply in 2011 and the following years. He noted that the issue of universities' autonomy in terms of deciding which vacancies might be filled was a significant one in the context of the discussions about the Framework that were taking place between the HEA and the IUA. The likely impact of the Framework on the quality of DCU's activities was noted as being a matter of concern. The members of the Council are requested to continue to exercise maximum prudence in relation to expenditure and, where relevant, to liaise closely with appropriate senior staff in the university about the possibility of filling vacant posts. (Item 3.1)
- 3.2** Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Director of Registry, noted that the specifications for the calculate programme related to ITS Version 14 were still being drawn up and that, once they had been signed off, work could begin on developing the programme and then testing it, the aim being to ensure its availability for the calculation of examination results in June 2010. Some additional calculate mechanisms would need to be developed to take account of programme-specific calculation regulations, and these would be ready by June to the extent possible, though staff workload issues would need to be factored into the timescale. (Item 8.1)
- 3.3** The Chair noted that the revised university website was in the course of development. (Item 8.3)

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 4 November and 2 December 2009

Approved. The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the strategic goals for 2009/10 which the EC had adopted and in relation to which work was now in progress were listed at Item 4.2 of the minutes of the 4 November 2009 meeting.

5. Minutes of the meeting of the University Standards Committee of 1 October 2009

Approved. The Deputy President/Registrar noted that, 2009/10 being the first year of implementation of the revised Marks and Standards, a number of issues had emerged which required clarification, and this was being provided on an ongoing basis. A final list of clarifications would be made available to the Council at its meeting of 14 April 2010, with requests for approval where appropriate and necessary, in preparation for the May examinations and the June Programme Board Examination Review Committee meetings and Progression and Awards Boards.

5.1 Minutes of the meetings of the Graduate Studies Board of 2 July and 10 September 2009

Approved.

6. President's report

6.1 The Chair outlined the present very challenging financial situation facing higher education, including DCU, noting the particular difficulty caused by the unevenness of the distribution of additional student numbers across the various institutions. He reiterated the importance of an extremely cautious approach to expenditure and noted that it was very unlikely, over the coming years, that funding would revert to the level experienced in the earlier years of the last decade.

6.2 The Deputy President/Registrar provided details about the changes in the university in terms of student numbers at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and the impact of recently-introduced programmes at undergraduate level on CAO first preferences. She noted the difficulty of balancing the decrease in resources with the government's intention to increase student numbers in higher education and encouraged Deans of Faculty and Heads of School to take as creative an approach as possible to responding to the challenges posed by this situation.

- 6.3** The Chair, on behalf of the Council, extended congratulations to the President-elect of DCU, Professor Brian Mac Craith, who is to take up office on 14 July 2010, noting that he would also express these congratulations in writing. He is to invite Professor Mac Craith to attend the 9 and 28 June 2010 meetings of the Council.

B: Policy and strategy issues

7. Ongoing developments with regard to DCU/RCSI/NUIM

The Chair noted that discussions on this matter were still in progress within the working group and that Dr Don Thornhill, facilitator to the group, had ascertained the views of key external stakeholders with a view to developing recommendations and thereby enabling a request for a decision in principle on the future relationship between the three institutions to be submitted to the Academic Council and the Governing Authority in June 2010. The varying level of discussion and debate about the issue across the three institutions was noted, as was the increasing trend towards cross-institutional strategic alliances more generally. The university's own new strategic plan is to be launched on 10 May 2010. The Chair noted also that Professor Brian Mac Craith was involved in all the discussions relating to strategic planning and relationships with other institutions. He also stressed that any significant changes to the current position would be notified to the members of the Council, either electronically or, if necessary, through specially-convened meetings of the Council and/or staff in general.

8. Proposals on notification of staff availability to students

Approved. Noted that, while it might be possible, at a future date, to create circumstances which would enable all staff members to be available concurrently, the logistics of this were inherently problematic and, in any event, online communication between staff and students greatly facilitates the circulation of information on availability and the making of appointments at any appropriate time. Professor O'Kennedy stressed the desirability of an appointments system as a means of ensuring that students had adequate time to engage with staff members within the designated hours of availability. It was noted that the proposals could helpfully be adapted for use with the personal tutor system.

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

Approved, including the following additional item: a validation recommendation in respect of a proposed MSc in Organisational Change and Leadership Development. The Deputy President/Registrar provided background information, in response to a

query, about the decision of the USC on 4 February 2010 to allow current and future students of the BA in Humanities in Oscalil to complete it on the basis of an undesignated timeframe.

C: Items for formal approval/noting

10. Validation recommendation: BSc (Hons) in Health Studies

Approved.

11 Accreditation reports:

11.1 BSc (Hons) in Horticulture

Approved.

11.2 MA in Supervisory Practice

Approved.

11.3 MA in Applied Christian Spirituality

Approved.

12. Faculty Awards Boards: recommendations for March 2010 conferring

Approved.

13. Progression and Awards Boards: recommendations for March 2010 conferring

Noted that, as the Progression and Awards Boards were still in progress, the recommendations would be made available to the Council electronically on Tuesday 16 February 2010.

14. Reports from Appeals Board: All Hallows College

Noted.

15. Any other business

Professor Richard O’Kennedy, Vice-President for Learning Innovation, and Dr Heinz Lechleiter, Director of Quality Promotion, noted that the institutional self-assessment report in preparation for the review of DCU in the context of the Institutional Reviews of Irish Universities was available on the IRIU section of the DCU website. They encouraged all members of the Council to read it, both in preparation for the peer review visit and because it summarises a range of up-to-date and salient information about the university. Dr Lechleiter will be in contact with various members of the Council to arrange meetings with the members of the Peer Review Group during their visit (1-4 March 2010). The Chair expressed appreciation, on behalf of the Council, to Professor O’Kennedy, Dr Lechleiter and all others involved in the IRIU process from DCU’s perspective and urged full participation in all aspect of the review process on the part of Council members.

Date of next meeting:

**Wednesday 14 April 2010
2.00 p.m. in AG01**

Signed: _____
President

Date: _____