

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday 14 April 2010

2.00-3.05 p.m. in AG01

PRESENT:

F Blin	C Long	A-G Olabi
C Bohan	C Mac an Bhaird	E O’Riordan
T Brady	B McConalogue	M Parkinson
O Bree	L McDermott (Secretary)	A Pearson-Evans
P Brereton	C McGonagle	J Quigley
J Bruton	A McGrady	A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)
J Carroll	J McKenna	M Scott
E Conway	A Moran	M Shine Thompson
J Costello	J-P Mosnier	D Sinclair
P Donnelly	C Mac Murchaidh	A Sinnott
J Dowling	P McNamara	M Slowey
J Doyle	P Meleady	P Smith
E Guilfoyle	J Morris	A Stover
T Hogan	M Munro	F von Prondzyski (Chair)
C Holland	G Murphy	M Ward
Md S Hossain	J Murphy	A Wickham
L Hourihane	J Needham	S Wickham
M Irwin-Bannon	A Neville	J Williams
B Kelly	M Nic Giolla Mhichíl	P Willis
H Lechleiter	P O’Byrne	P Young
T Leufer		

APOLOGIES:

B Casey	M Kelly	K MacKeogh
B Daly	E Kennedy	P McMorrow
T Draper	S Knowlton	C Nic Pháidín
B Flood	A Leahy	R O’Kennedy
P Flood	J Looney	B Pierce
J Geraghty	J Lynch	P Sheehan
S Hashmi	C McDonagh	M Smyth
S Ingle	D McGann	R Tobin

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the transfer of Items 11 and 16 from Section C to Section B and the deferral of Item 13.2 to the 9 June 2010 meeting of the Council.

A: Minutes and related issues**2. Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Council of 10 February 2010**

The minutes were confirmed subject to the replacement of the reference to '10 March 2010' in Item 7 by a reference to '10 May 2010'. They were then signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

3.1 The Deputy President/Registrar noted that extensive testing of the Rule One Calculate Programme, which supports the main principles of new Marks and Standards, was in progress. Full testing commenced on 29 March and is being conducted over a four-week period. When testing for the Rule One Programme is complete, the working group will make a decision on whether or not it will be possible to progress any other non-standard rule (i.e. programme-specific regulations) prior to the Semester 2 examinations. The Deputy President/Registrar also indicated that Ms Phylomena McMorro, Director of Registry, would provide updated information on this matter to the Council at its meeting of 9 June 2010. She also noted that this testing had involved very significant work from staff in both the Registry and the Faculties and expressed her thanks to all those involved in this important project. (Item 3.2)

3.2 It was noted that the recommendations of the February 2010 Progression and Awards Boards had been approved electronically by the Council on 16 February 2010. (Item 13)

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 13 January and 3 February 2010

Approved. The Deputy President/Registrar noted that progress had been made in achieving the strategic goals which the EC had adopted for 2009/10.

5. Minutes of the meeting of the University Standards Committee of 3 December 2009

Approved subject to a request by the Council to the USC to agree a change to Item 6.1.4.1 at its meeting of 3 June 2010, i.e. to replace the reference to ‘an additional nominee’ by a reference to ‘an alternative title’.

5.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 5 November 2009

Approved.

6. President’s report

- 6.1** The Chair noted that the outcome of the PRTL I 5 submission was still awaited and that, because responsibility for it had been transferred from the Department of Education and Skills to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, some further discussion might now be required in this latter department prior to the notification of the outcome.
- 6.2** The Chair also noted that it was likely that the future discussions between DCU, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth would take as their basis the shared translational research hub which had its origins in the PRTL I 5 submission. A recent collaborative initiative between RCSI and University College Cork was mentioned; however, it was noted that notwithstanding any such bilateral arrangements RCSI has confirmed that it remains committed to the partnership discussions with DCU and NUIM. Recent initiatives such as the strategic alliance between the University of Limerick and the National University of Ireland, Galway were noted.
- 6.3** The Chair noted that the outcome of another major initiative, i.e. the Strategic Review of Higher Education, was also awaited and that the likely publication date was not known.
- 6.4** A discussion took place about the recent media coverage of alleged grade inflation in the Leaving Certificate and in higher education. It was noted that, notwithstanding the fact that the situation is quite different from how it appeared in the media, a negative impression had been created and would need to be mitigated to the extent possible. A contributing factor to this had been the inadvertent omission of DCU by a senior member of staff of Google Ireland when listing the institutions from which Google sought graduate recruits; the Chair undertook to see if the impression thus given might be corrected in the public record. A number of other points were mentioned: the relationship between the academic ability of incoming students and

their overall grade on completion of their studies; the importance (as highlighted by Google) of ensuring that, upon graduation, students have excellent communication skills; the importance of discussing issues relating to grade inflation in the broader context of quality assurance. The Deputy President/Registrar alluded to a recent report from the EU Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs¹ in which the Irish university sector is mentioned favourably, particularly with regard to efficiency and graduation rates. She indicated that the online location of this report would be made available to the members of the Council.

B: Policy and strategy issues

7. Revised proposals on the academic calendar

7.1 Dr Sheelagh Wickham, chair of the working group on the academic calendar, summarised both the feedback received by the group in relation to possible changes which had been proposed and the recommendations of the group. The Chair expressed appreciation to Dr Wickham and the other members of the group for the very considerable time and effort they had devoted to their work. He undertook to give consideration to the various issues which had emerged from the discussions on the calendar and to make a recommendation to the Council on the issue, either before or at the meeting of 9 June 2010.

7.2 As a related but separate issue, the Chair also undertook to liaise with the Deputy President/Registrar on the possible standardisation of the reading week system across the university and to make a recommendation on this matter to the Council at its meeting of 9 June 2010.

8. Recommendations from the Appeals Board about undergraduate and taught postgraduate projects

8.1 The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the University Standards Committee had endorsed these recommendations at its meeting of 1 April 2010. The Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education are already engaged in an exercise to gather data about practice across Faculties in administering projects, and the information yielded by this is likely to inform the development of the guidelines recommended by the Appeals Board. Mr John Murphy noted that the recommendations had the potential to

¹ *Study on the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Public Spending on Tertiary Education* (Economic Papers 390, November 2009)

address concerns expressed to him by students in relation to the administration of projects.

- 8.2** Professor Gary Murphy noted that, once the draft revised *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* were approved, a more structured system for dealing with appeals by research students – as provided for in the revised regulations – would come into being.

9. Report from Director of Quality Promotion

- 9.1** Dr Heinz Lechleiter summarised the outcome of the Institutional Review which had taken place from 1 to 4 March 2010, noting that the reviewers had been broadly positive in their comments and had confirmed that the university is compliant with statutory requirements, European Standards and Guidelines and national, European and international best practice. He summarised the five commendations and five recommendations they had made, noting however that their report was still in draft form. The five commendations are as follows: the university has embedded a quality culture; the standard of the Institutional Self-Assessment Report was high; the Academic Framework for Innovation is a very positive development and the work carried out on it to date, particularly by the Director of AFI, the AFI Fellows and the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education, is impressive; the development of common themes among the outcomes of reviews has provided a mechanism for focusing on areas that require attention; the development of topic reviews is a positive one and is evidence of a student-centered approach. The five recommendations are as follows: it will be important to continue the efforts to synchronise internal review cycles, external review cycles and strategic planning cycles; a ‘standing committee’ of Governing Authority should be established to facilitate communication between the university and the external environment; a university-wide management information system should be put in place; a more consistent approach to giving feedback to students should be developed (Dr Lechleiter noted the relevance of this recommendation to the recommendations of the Appeals Board (see Item 8 above)); a robust performance and appraisal system should be put in place.
- 9.2** Dr Lechleiter noted that the university now had an opportunity to comment on the reviewers’ draft report from the point of view of factual accuracy and that the final report would be published on 17 June 2010.
- 9.3** The Chair thanked Dr Lechleiter, Professor O’Kennedy and all others who had contributed to the very considerable task of preparing for the review, as well as those who had met the reviewers.

11. Marks and Standards: clarification of outstanding issues

The amendments to Marks and Standards, aimed at clarifying a number of queries that had arisen in the course of 2009/10, were approved. The amended Marks and Standards will now be made available on line and at the briefing meetings for Faculties to be held prior to the June 2010 Programme Board Examination and Review Committee meetings and Progression and Awards Boards. It was noted that, in these new Marks and Standards, as in those in use up to September 2009, compensation could, where appropriate and provided all regulations were complied with, be applied to more than one module.

16. Report on INTRA activities 2009

- 16.1** The report was noted. It was suggested that the reference, in the last sentence in the fourth paragraph, to the existence of large numbers of students in each programme with weak academic records did not reflect the position for many programmes and might usefully be reworded.
- 16.2** Some issues of concern mentioned in the report were noted, including the increasing difficulty of finding placements for students owing to the current difficult economic climate and the reluctance of some employers to offer placements to students with weak academic records or students from non-EEA countries. The Chair noted also that the level of enthusiasm shown by staff for undertaking INTRA visits tends to vary. It was suggested that an earlier start date for INTRA placements might be beneficial for students. The importance of ensuring the availability of placements, in view of the centrality of INTRA both to students' experience of university and to their employment prospects, was noted.
- 16.3** It was agreed that the members of the Council would submit to the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education comments and suggestions for addressing the problems which had been identified and that the INTRA Office itself would also be requested to liaise with the Associate Deans and make a submission. This work will inform a presentation on possible future actions in respect of INTRA to be made to the 9 June 2010 meeting of the Council.
- 16.4** The Deputy President/Registrar noted the links between the current issues relating to INTRA and the current discussions on graduate attributes which are taking place in the Education Committee. She noted that further discussions on INTRA (including the possibility of introducing changes to the way it is assessed) would take place in the EC in 2010/11.

C: Items for formal approval/noting**10. Matters from the University Standards Committee and the Education Committee**

Approved.

12. Validation recommendations:**12.1 MSc in Organisational Change and Leadership Development**

Approved.

12.2 Graduate Certificate in Digital Marketing

Approved.

12.3 MA in Ethics

Approved.

13. Re-accreditation recommendation: Bachelor of Nursing Studies

Approved.

14. Reappointment of Chairperson to Examination Appeals Board

Approved, with effect from 1 July 2010 for a period of three years to 30 June 2013. The Deputy President/Registrar thanked the Chairperson, Professor John Carroll, and the other members of the Appeals Board for their dedication to carrying out the duties of the Board and for shouldering a growing workload.

15. Any other business

It was noted that, on 4 March 2010, the Council had approved, electronically, the award of an *aegrotat* Graduate Certificate in Operations and Technology Management to a deceased student.

Date of next meeting:

**Wednesday 9 June 2010
2.00 p.m. in AG01**

Signed: _____
President

Date: _____