

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 1 February 2012

2.00-4.00 p.m. in A204

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Claire Bohan, Mr Cillian Byrne, Mr Jim Dowling, Dr John Doyle, Dr Sarah Ingle, Mr Billy Kelly, Dr Lisa Looney, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Anne Sinnott

Apologies: Professor John Costello, Professor Alan Harvey, Mr Martin Molony, Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh

In attendance: Ms Jennifer Bruton
Ms Muireann Ní Dhuigneáin (for Item 4)
Ms Aisling McKenna
Dr Sheelagh Wickham

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the withdrawal of Item 8 and the inclusion of two submissions under Item 9.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 11 January 2012

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** It was agreed that a meeting involving Dr Anne Sinnott and members of Oscail staff would be convened to discuss issues relating to the proposed undergraduate programme in Procurement and Supply Management. It was noted that a title and credit rating different from those approved by the Validation Subgroup and Education Committee in March 2011 are being proposed. (Item 3.15 of the meeting of 7 September 2011).
- 3.2** It was noted that work is in progress to ascertain both the proportion of deferred students who subsequently take up their places and the views of students who withdrew from the University some years ago. (Item 3.1)
- 3.3** It was noted that information and guidelines for Programme Chairs would shortly be updated and made available. (Item 3.2)
- 3.4** It was noted that the training proposals in respect of Business Intelligence would be considered by the Senior Management Group. (Item 3.3)
- 3.5** It was noted that the work in respect of DCU Online, including the ascertaining of the resources that would be available to support it, was ongoing. (Item 3.4)
- 3.6** It was noted that a report on the possibilities for wider use of the METIS system would be made to the EC at the earliest opportunity. (Item 3.5)
- 3.7** A template for mapping Graduate Attributes on to learning outcomes for proposed undergraduate programmes will be included in the regulations and guidelines for validation proposals. Employer feedback on the Attributes will be analysed in detail in due course. (Item 3.6)
- 3.8** It was noted that the latest data on 'at risk' students would be analysed in detail as soon as possible. (Item 3.7)
- 3.9** It was noted that the optimum student profile was under consideration by Senior Management. (Item 3.8)
- 3.10** Developments in respect of the National Student Survey (the setting up of which is stipulated in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*) were noted. A pilot survey is being developed with funding from NAIRTL and on the basis of recommendations by the IUA Registrars' group. The aim will be to adapt elements of various international systems so that there will be a focus not only on the student experience and student satisfaction but also on student engagement with higher education. First- and final-year students in the universities (and the Institutes of

- Technology if the Institutes so choose) will be surveyed. Concerns have been expressed by the higher education institutions with respect to the validity and the ease of implementation of the pilot, and these will need to be addressed. A decision will need to be taken, once the pilot has finished, as to whether an off-the-shelf or a bespoke system will be used in the longer term; if the former, some localisation to suit the Irish context may need to be carried out. Very considerable work has been carried out to date by the working group which is progressing this issue. (Item 3.9)
- 3.11** It was noted that the working group on feedback to students had submitted to the University Standards Committee meeting of 26 January 2012 the results of a survey of current practice which had been undertaken in the Faculties. These results are detailed and interesting and point to a number of common themes. The Chair, on behalf of the EC, expressed appreciation to the Deans of Faculty and the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education for the work carried out on this to date. Recommendations on good practice will be made to the USC, and noted to the EC, before the end of 2011/12. (Item 3.11)
- 3.12** It was noted that the management of independent modules would need to be monitored on an ongoing basis. (Item 3.14)
- 3.13** The Chair noted that dialogue with the Teaching Council about the range of issues which had given rise to considerable recent discussion in the university and in the higher education sector generally was in progress and that a joint IUA/Teaching Council working group was established to address these issues. They include the implications of recent Council decisions for the content and credit ratings of concurrent and consecutive degrees, for the locus of responsibility for registering teachers and for the management of school placements. (Item 3.15)
- 3.14** It was noted that the template with respect to programme review had been circulated with a request to Deans of Faculty, Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and the Director of Oscail to submit feedback to Dr Ingle by 24 February 2012. (Item 5.2)
- 3.15** It was noted that a recommendation about the approach to the next cycle of quality reviews would be made to Executive by the Quality Promotion Committee. (Item 5.3)
- 3.16** It was noted that the work of the Working Group on Non-Major Awards to implement the recommendations of the EC was ongoing. (Item 7.1)
- 3.17** It was noted that slightly revised documentation in respect of the optional year abroad on the BA in Contemporary Culture and Society had been made available by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. (Item 11)

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Presentation on HEA First Destinations information

- 4.1 In the course of her presentation, Ms Ní Dhuigneáin noted the following:
- notwithstanding the adverse economic climate, DCU graduates are performing relatively well in the employment market
 - the majority of the fifty companies which employ the highest numbers of DCU graduates are large international companies
 - the most recent post-graduation survey indicates that a new category has emerged in that some graduates are now pursuing unpaid internships (e.g. the JobBridge Scheme)
 - the advent of Generation 21 has the potential to enhance the employability of DCU graduates
 - e-portfolios will also be helpful to graduates
 - it would be desirable to continue to integrate careers education into curricula
 - it would be desirable to involve employers more closely in the design of curricula; this would be particularly helpful in giving them opportunities to see how curricula facilitate students' academic development over time
 - it would be helpful to the University for the form used by the HEA to elicit information to be updated (particularly with regard to the categories of employment specified on it) and for consideration to be given to using more modern methods of communication with graduates
 - Business Intelligence would be the most appropriate tool with which to conduct the survey within the University; using it would, in particular, facilitate the integration of a large number of items of data which are collected at present but are not necessarily all integrated with the information collected for First Destinations
 - consideration could be given to the setting up of a steering group with respect to data collection
 - consideration could be given to the development of a system of longitudinal surveys of students/graduates.
- 4.2 Ms Ní Dhuigneáin will produce a report on the above matters. It was agreed that Ms Ní Dhuigneáin and Ms McKenna would liaise as appropriate with regard to these matters. It was agreed that Dr Wickham would join the discussion from the perspective of the forthcoming quality review of the Faculty of Science and Health.
- 4.3 Ms Ní Dhuigneáin noted that the advice given to students as to whether they should undertake postgraduate study in DCU or in another institution always focused on the importance of identifying the centre of excellence in the relevant discipline (rather than selecting an institution *per se*).

- 4.4** The Chair, on behalf of the EC, expressed appreciation to Ms Ní Dhuígneáin for her presentation, noting the very satisfactory response rate to surveys but also the potential difficulty of sustaining this given the likely decrease in the time available for staff to follow up with graduates. She requested the members of the EC to communicate with Ms Ní Dhuígneáin with respect to issues relating to her presentation that would be of relevance to the planning of programmes and other activities in Faculties.

5. Further recommendations on Teaching Quality Evaluation and Enhancement

- 5.1** In the discussion on these recommendations, the following were noted:
- work is in progress to ensure that the module-specific data available through Moodle is completely up to date and accurate
 - the outcomes of the survey carried out in Faculties about the provision of feedback to students (see Item 3.11 above) are of relevance; they indicate a need for support for part-time lecturers, and lecturers with large class groups, in terms of providing feedback
- 5.2** It was agreed to recommend to Academic Council that a pilot survey of teaching be carried out University wide in Semester 2 2011/12. This survey will cover all modules in all years. The experience of the pilot will inform the decision that will be taken as to the optimum way of surveying teaching in the longer term. It may be possible, over time, to integrate some of the elements of the more extensive initiative that was suggested in the paper considered by the EC at its meeting of 5 October 2011.
- 5.3** It was agreed that it would be desirable to find a title for the initiative that better reflected its purpose than does the present one and that suggestions should be submitted to the Deputy President/Registrar by 12.00 midday on 2 February 2012.

6. Graduate Attributes and related issues

6.1 Update on activity relating to the Graduate Attributes

- 6.1.1** Dr Bohan made a presentation on the draft web pages in respect of the Graduate Attributes, undertook to make the web link available to the EC membership and requested feedback.

- 6.1.2** It was noted that consideration might usefully be given to emphasising the potential for developing the Attributes through actions designed to help others as well as through actions focused on the self, and that reference could also be made to the acquisition of good habits, e.g. in terms of requesting feedback from lecturers on an ongoing basis. The positive contribution to student welfare inherent in the development of the Attributes might also perhaps be emphasised to a greater extent than is the case at present. Consideration could also be given to the usefulness of the material from the employer perspective. The wording used in the web pages should emphasise the importance of the Attributes while not being overly prescriptive. It will be important to conceptualise the Attributes as being owned by the University as a whole and amenable to development primarily through programmes of study as distinct from being associated mainly with a particular unit (such as Student Support and Development).
- 6.1.3** It was noted that the mapping exercise between Graduate Attributes and programme learning outcomes had been completed with respect to all undergraduate programmes in all Faculties and that the task was now to ensure University-wide understanding and awareness of the Attributes and encourage appropriate actions to facilitate their development by students. It was agreed that the March 2012 Programme Board meetings, at which the academic structures for 2012/13 would be discussed, would be appropriate forums in which to highlight the Attributes and that their integration into programmes could also be evaluated in the context of the annual programme reviews.
- 6.1.4** The Chair, on behalf of the EC, expressed appreciation to Dr Bohan and the other members of the Graduate Attributes working group for the significant work completed to date, and noted the importance of ensuring that the initiative continued to be implemented in a timely fashion.

6.2 Recommendations with respect to e-portfolios

It was noted that the developmental work on e-portfolios was in progress. The importance of making available a system that would both be user friendly and be experienced as a valuable tool by students and staff was noted. Student opinion on the usefulness of e-portfolios will be ascertained once more detailed information about them is available; early indications are that students would be interested in the potential of e-portfolios.

7. Resources in respect of university readiness

- 7.1** Dr Bohan requested feedback on the online resources available to date. It was agreed that these resources should be mentioned at upcoming meetings, such as Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committee meetings and the March 2012 Programme Board meetings; the importance of raising awareness of the resources University wide in the near term was noted. It was agreed that consideration of the resources and the extent to which they complement programme-specific resources should be built into the annual programme reviews. It was noted that ‘university readiness’ is the term used sector wide, notwithstanding the fact that a term such as ‘transition’ might be preferable.
- 7.2** The Chair, on behalf of the EC, expressed appreciation to Dr Bohan for the work she had carried out to date in respect of the resources.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES**8. Proposed restructuring of the BSc in Education and Training**

Withdrawn from the agenda.

9. Any other business

- 9.1** It was agreed that the Faculty Managers would be invited to shadow Ms McDermott at Accreditation Board meetings with a view to enhancing the level of organisational knowledge and experience with respect to the management of such meetings.
- 9.2** It was noted that Dr Dónal O’Mathúna, Chair of the Research Ethics Committee, had raised the issue of the role of the REC vis-à-vis undergraduate research projects. There may be a need for consistency of approach across the University (some Schools request REC advice and others do not), for consideration to be given to arriving at a shared understanding of the purpose of research at undergraduate level and for discussion of whether or not there are issues which should not be the focus of research at this level. It was agreed that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education would discuss these issues, consult the Associate Deans for Research and submit a paper for the consideration of the EC at its meeting of 7 March 2012.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 7 March 2012, 2.00 p.m. in A204

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____