

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 1 April 2009

2.00-4.50 p.m. in A204

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Pat Brereton,
Mr Jim Dowling, Ms Susan Hurley, Ms Louise McDermott
(Secretary), Dr Kay MacKeogh, Professor Bernard Pierce,
Professor Malcolm Smyth

Apologies: Dr Claire Bohan, Dr Françoise Blin, Dr Mike Hopkins,
Professor Eugene Kennedy, Mr Gordon McConnell,
Dr Mary Shine Thompson

In attendance: Professor Martin Henry (for Item 4)
Mr Seamus Fox and Ms Jean Hughes (for Item 5)

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of two submissions under Item 10.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 4 March 2009

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Noted that initial draft proposals on credit transfer from other institutions would be discussed by the University Standards Committee at its meeting of 2 April 2009. (Item 3.2)
- 3.2** Noted that the IUA Registrars' meeting scheduled for 30 March 2009 had not in fact taken place and that the next meeting would be in June 2009. The Chair is to submit proposals to this meeting in relation to NFQ Level 9 issues and credit transfer from other institutions; even if time does not permit detailed discussion of these issues, the university will have had an opportunity to take a proactive stance in relation to them. (Item 3.2)
- 3.3** Noted that the meeting of the Accreditation Board for the proposed BSc (Hons) in Aviation Management with Pilot Studies had been scheduled for 29 April 2009. (Item 3.4)
- 3.4** Noted that proposals on procedures for validation in 2009/10 would be made to the 6 May 2009 meeting of the EC. (Item 3.5)
- 3.5** Noted that an analysis of module registration details, conducted by Dr MacKeogh on the basis of information supplied by the Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, would be on the agenda of the 6 May 2009 meeting of the EC. (Item 3.8)
- 3.6** Noted that a revised validation proposal for a BSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy would be submitted for consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 12 May 2009. (Item 4.1)
- 3.7** Noted that the meeting of the Accreditation Board for the proposed BA in Theology and Lifelong Education would be scheduled for mid May 2009. (Item 4.2)
- 3.8** Noted that the Validation Subgroup had, at its meeting of 10 March 2009, recommended that the proposed BSc in Psychology proceed to accreditation and that the meeting of the Accreditation Board for this proposed programme would be scheduled for mid May 2009. (Item 4.3.1)

- 3.9** Noted that the new financial model for validation proposals might require some further discussion to ensure that it reflects as fully as possible the likely financial benefit to the School/Faculty. Agreed that Mr Eamonn Cuggy would be invited to make a further presentation on the model to the Education Committee prior to making a presentation to Executive. (Item 4.3.2)
- 3.10** Noted that the revised validation proposal for a BSc in Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing would be submitted for consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 12 May 2009. (Item 4.4)
- 3.11** Noted that Executive had established a working group, chaired by Professor Martin Henry and with representation from Faculties, Registry and ISS, to discuss the issues relating to access to student data by academic staff. (Item 5.2)
- 3.12** With regard to the proposals on programme review, currently under review in Faculties and to be considered by the 6 May 2009 meeting of the EC, the following were noted: a representative of Oscail would be invited to work with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education in co-ordinating the development of the proposals; this group would liaise with Dr Heinz Lechleiter as well as with the working group on the issue which had met in January 2009; further observations on the issue could still be submitted by EC members to Dr Blin cc. Ms McDermott. (Item 5.2)
- 3.13** Noted that it had not proved necessary to circulate to the EC procedures in relation to the pilot project on teaching quality evaluation due to be conducted in DCU Business School, but that Dr MacKeogh, Dr Anne Sinnott and Ms Morag Munro were due to meet to discuss these procedures further. (Item 6.1)
- 3.14** A proposal on meeting the challenge of the government's upskilling initiative, prepared following a meeting between representatives of DCU and of a number of other local higher education institutions, was noted, as was a report on the outcome of the survey of final-year student intentions carried out by the Institutional Analysis and Research Officer. The following issues arose in the ensuing discussion:
- it will be important to ensure that any activities undertaken in the upskilling context are not financially disadvantageous for the university
 - the current commitment of the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance to a range of activities including graduate education may preclude it from participating in the discussion on upskilling initiative; this leaves scope none the less for DCU and other higher education institutions to respond to the initiative on the basis of meeting local/regional needs and with a view to leveraging funding from commercial and industrial sources

- it may be desirable to review the recommendations on Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning approved by Academic Council on 19 February 2003
- a working group on flexible opportunities has been established in DCU and includes Dr MacKeogh as well as representatives from Student Support and Development and the Student Recruitment Office; Dr MacKeogh will report on developments.

The Chair requested EC members to submit comments on the upskilling proposal, noting that the issue would be discussed again at the 6 May 2009 meeting of the EC and, if appropriate, at the 10 June 2009 meeting of Academic Council. It would also be brought to the attention of Executive. Comments from the other institutions which had met to initiate the proposal would be considered after the discussion at Executive. (Item 8)

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Presentation on AFI implementation timeline

4.1 Professor Martin Henry, Academic Director of the Academic Framework for Innovation, made a presentation on this timeline. The following issues arose in the ensuing discussion:

- it will be important to make timely decisions on the feasibility of implementing all the proposed AFI developments and to ensure that discussions on the various aspects of AFI are conducted concurrently
- ensuring a shared vision for AFI across the university community, including a shared understanding of the educational values underlying it and of the unique contribution it can make to the student experience, is crucial to its success
- flexibility of provision can be conceived of as relating to a range of aspects of the student experience
- flexibility in terms of provision outside the traditional timetable – e.g. accelerated provision over the Summer months, or evening provision of modules – should be considered
- the Enhancement of Learning Strategy (see Item 5 below) has a close connection to AFI, and the opportunities for synergy between the two developments should be availed of
- it may be possible to leverage the potential of AFI to assist the university in responding to the government's upskilling initiative (see Item 3.14 above)
- if student fees are reintroduced, students may choose to combine work and study over a longer period of time than at present, and if this is the case they stand to benefit from the fuller development of AFI

- developments in the provision of taught Graduate Diploma/Master's programmes are tending to result in these programmes having significant AFI characteristics already
 - notwithstanding the discussion that has taken place about the desirability of having external funding for a management information system to facilitate AFI, it should be borne in mind that the university will always require such a system even in the absence of such funding
 - the rewriting of module descriptors in terms of learning outcomes, scheduled for the period May/June 2009, will be facilitated by the use of software which is currently being purchased and by the identification of clusters of local experts who will be in a position to expedite the process.
- 4.2** The Chair thanked Professor Henry for his presentation and suggested that it would be desirable for an updated presentation to be made to the 6 May 2009 meeting of the EC and possibly also to the 10 June 2009 meeting of Academic Council.

5. Presentation on the Enhancement of Learning strategy

- 5.1** Mr Seamus Fox, Oscail, and Ms Jean Hughes, Director of SIF Programmes, made a presentation on this strategy, and more specifically on the implementation plan. The following issues arose in the ensuing discussion:

- there is an inevitable tension between the existence of a wide range of points of view within and across Faculties and the need to arrive at a common university strategic position with regard to the enhancement of learning; the role of the Learning Advisory Innovation Panel is very important in facilitating the necessary synthesis
- it would be desirable to reword Objective 1 in more emphatic terms than is the case at present, with particular reference to the issue of sustainability which appears towards the end
- consideration could be given to requesting each Faculty to adopt and pursue one of the objectives as distinct from having all Faculties involved in all objectives
- it will be important, in the implementation plan, to make explicit the links between all the initiatives designed to support students, including mature students
- it will be important to ensure that the proposed timelines are both realistic in terms of what can be achieved and precise enough to ensure timely completion of activities
- as a related issue, it is important that the key performance indicators are written in such a way as to make it clear exactly what can be delivered on

- the strategy has clear links with the Academic Framework for Innovation (see Item 4 above), and these links are potentially very fruitful in terms of developing flexible opportunities for students including a range of option modules
- the AFI-related exercise in terms of integrating award and module learning outcomes will be very helpful in ensuring that relevant key performance indicators in the implementation plan are met
- it will be important to ensure that the implementation plan is flexible enough to meet emerging needs on the basis of developments at DRHEA level
- undertaking formal evaluation of teaching quality is an essential element in demonstrating the university's commitment to ensuring a positive student experience
- it is important to ensure close communication between relevant staff members in terms of both enhancement of learning issues and research issues, and the fact that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and the Associate Deans for Research now meet one another on a structured basis is welcomed.

5.2 The Chair thanked Mr Fox and Ms Hughes for their presentation.

6. **Proposals on procedures for dealing with stand-alone modules and related issues**

6.1 The proposed procedure in relation to the current learning outcomes exercise was approved. With regard to the proposed procedure in relation to stand-alone modules and the proposed procedure in relation to changes to titles/content/target audience for existing programmes, it was agreed that a fuller proposal would be prepared by Professor Scott and Ms McDermott and submitted to the 4 June 2009 meeting of the University Standards Committee (on the basis that the USC membership has very considerable experience in these matters). This proposal is to incorporate the principle that approval should be conducted at Faculty level to the extent possible and on the basis of rigorous procedures which would include taking advice from a minimum of one external examiner. The proposal will also include a template for use by Faculties and a recommendation as to the percentage of proposed change to a programme that would be deemed to require re-accreditation (or, in some cases, re-validation).

6.2 Agreed that it would be very helpful to have a mechanism for marketing stand-alone modules, particularly in view of the current upskilling initiative (see Item 3.14 above).

7. Proposals on programme titles and designatory letters

7.1 Agreed that further information on practice elsewhere with regard to the choice of programme titles and designatory letters would be obtained with a view to having a revised submission on the matter available for the 9 September 2009 meeting of the EC.

7.2 Agreed that consideration should be given to the inclusion on parchments of details of specialisms taken within awards as well as details of the grade awarded, and that consultation would take place with the Registry as to the feasibility of including these.

8. Revised policy on due diligence

8.1 Agreed that clarification would be sought on the 'process post due diligence' which had been included in the revised policy.

8.2 Agreed that the list of proposed indicators for institutional reputation should include the name, position and contact details of the principal contact person in the institution with which it is proposed to develop a relationship.

8.3 Agreed that the policy should involve a requirement to confirm that the proposed relationship with the external institution(s) was consonant with university, Faculty and School strategic plans.

8.4 Noted that it would be helpful to ascertain, from the international component strategy of the new strategic plan, the broad principles the university has articulated for itself in terms of its relationships with international institutions. Dr MacKeogh undertook to do this.

8.5 Agreed that Mr McConnell would be requested to make a revised policy available, taking into account the above issues. Agreed that the conduct of due diligence should form part of the preparation of validation proposals and that provision should be made in validation documentation for the inclusion of both confirmation that due diligence had been carried out, where relevant, and the completed form outlining the proposed indicators for institutional reputation. Agreed that, prior to validation, the relevant Dean(s) of Faculty should bring to the attention of Executive the fact that it was proposed to develop a relationship with the proposed external institution(s) so that any issues or concerns Executive might identify could be addressed at an early stage.

9. For noting: changes to the current MA in School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care, Mater Dei Institute of Education

Noted.

10. Any other business

10.1 A request from the School of Electronic Engineering for approval of a proposal to participate in an Erasmus Mundus II Joint Master's funding proposal, prior to university validation and accreditation, was approved on the basis that the deadline for submission of the proposal was such as to preclude the completion of validation and accreditation before it. In the event that the proposal is successful, validation and accreditation will need to be carried out in the normal way. Noted that some issues relating to the credit structure of the proposed Joint Master's programme would need discussion, and agreed that they would be factored into the development of proposals on credit transfer which was being undertaken in the context of the University Standards Committee (see Item 3.1 above). Noted that the School of Communications was considering participation in a separate Erasmus Mundus II Joint Master's funding proposal.

10.2 Noted that the EC had, on an electronic basis, approved a *curriculum vitae* for Professor Peter Morrell of Cranfield University, who had been proposed as an additional member of the Accreditation Board for the proposed BSc in Aviation Management with Pilot Studies.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 6 May 2009, 2.00 p.m. in A204

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____