

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 1 December 2010

2.00-4.00 p.m. in A204

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Claire Bohan, Mr Cillian Byrne, Mr Jim Dowling, Dr Sarah Ingle, Mr Billy Kelly, Mr Martin Molony, Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Professor Richard O’Kennedy, Professor Bernard Pierce

Apologies: Ms Jean Hughes, Professor Eithne Guilfoyle, Professor Malcolm Smyth

In attendance: Ms Aisling McKenna, Dr Sheelagh Wickham
For Item 4.3: Professor Brian MacCraith, Mr Colin Oliver, Ms Megan O’Riordan

The Chair welcomed Dr Sarah Ingle, Director of Quality Promotion, and Mr Martin Molony, the newly-elected Academic Council representative on the Education Committee, to their first meeting of the committee.

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted, though it was agreed to defer Items 4.4 and 5 to the 12 January 2011 meeting of the EC.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 4 November 2010

The minutes were confirmed subject to the following:

In respect of Item 3.15, it was agreed to reword the last sentence so that it reads:

Noted that Programme Chairs had been advised that the most common student queries related to transferring from one programme to another and to programme structures; there has not been an increase in transfers in this academic year but there has been an increase in enquiries submitted to Student Support and Development about the possibility of transferring.

In respect of Item 3.17, it was agreed to insert a footnote to indicate that the report on the personal tutor system had been submitted for the consideration of Executive not at its meeting of 8 November 2010, as had been envisaged, but at its meeting of 30 November 2010. (The Chair circulated the report to the EC members.)

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Noted that proposals on the Recognition of Prior Learning were being discussed both in the Faculties and sector wide and that final proposals for a University-level policy would be made to the University Standards Committee at its meeting of 3 February 2011. (Item 3.1)
- 3.2** Noted that surveys of student opinion would be carried out in all Faculties in 2010/11, at a time to be determined in due course, and that Mr Billy Kelly would report to the other Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and to Ms Aisling McKenna on the outcomes in the pilot exercise carried out in DCU Business School once a full analysis of these outcomes had been carried out. (Item 3.3)
- 3.3** Noted that the action plan following the institutional review of DCU in March 2010 is being prepared. (Item 3.7)
- 3.4** Noted that an application for Erasmus Mundus funding would be resubmitted by the School of Physical Sciences. (Item 3.8)
- 3.5** Noted that the work of the working group on the provision of information and guidelines for Programme Chairs was progressing and that it was intended that it be completed shortly. (Item 3.10)
- 3.6** Noted that the programme review template was being revised to take account of the experience gleaned through the pilot reviews in 2009/11 and to incorporate consideration of INTRA and possibly of the year abroad for DCU students also, and that it would be shared with Dr Sarah Ingle, Director of Quality Promotion. Noted also that discussions were in progress with ISS about the provision of a user-friendly web interface. (Item 3.11)

- 3.7** Noted that the report from the Skills and Training Subcommittee of IBEC had been made available to the EC. (Item 3.14)
- 3.8** Noted, in relation to the report on the personal tutor system considered by Executive at its meeting of 30 November 2010 (see Item 2 above), that three options exist: not to take any specific action (this option is not regarded as being viable); to proceed on the basis that a variety of systems, tailored to local needs, should be developed and implemented in the University; to proceed on the basis that a reworked University-wide system should be developed and implemented. The Chair noted that this matter would need further discussion. (Items 3.17 and 4.3)
- 3.9** Noted that the proposed orientation module should henceforth be referred to as the 'University Readiness Module' and that it would be delivered partly, but not wholly, on line. Work to develop it is ongoing. (Item 3.18)
- 3.10** Noted that all module descriptors had now been submitted to the OVPLI for the purposes of determining their fitness for purpose and that a system for doing this work had been devised and was being implemented. (Item 3.21)
- 3.11** Noted that the Dublin Centre for Academic Development had agreed to make certain modules from the various member institutions, in particular modules relating to the development of teaching skills for lecturers in higher education, available to all DCAD member institutions. (Item 3.22)
- 3.12** Noted that the preparations for the visit to the University on 15 December 2010 by members of the IUQB were in progress and that further details about this would shortly be made available to the EC. The Chair noted that, following the announcement by the IUQB that guidelines of good practice in respect of programme approval were to be developed, the IUA had requested that all universities be involved in the preparatory discussions, and that this was the reason for the visit. Noted that the guidelines, once developed, would be integrated into procedures used by the Quality Promotion Unit, as appropriate. (Item 3.23)
- 3.13** Noted that the re-accreditation of the BSc in Nursing had progressed satisfactorily and was nearing completion, and that the recommendations of the (electronic) Accreditation Board would be submitted to the Academic Council meeting of 8 December 2010, with a request for approval. (Item 3.24)
- 3.14** Agreed that the recommendations of the working group on INTRA would be submitted for the consideration of Academic Council at its meeting of 8 December 2010. These recommendations are as follows:

- the INTRA system is working satisfactorily on the whole, but action needs to be taken to ensure that DCU retains its competitive advantage in relation to it given that other institutions are continuing to develop work placement systems and these may be extended to Arts/Humanities students
 - learning outcomes for INTRA need to be developed, with due account taken of the extensive work already undertaken in respect of learning outcomes more generally in the University and of the ongoing work on graduate attributes (see Item 4.2 below)
 - issues such as the preference of some employers for taking on only high-achieving students, and the tendency not to wish to take on non-EU students, must be addressed
 - Heads of School/Heads of Units are to be asked to identify discrete projects which students might undertake where no INTRA placements are available (a situation which is likely to become more common given the difficult economic climate) and which would allow them to achieve the same learning outcomes as an INTRA placement
 - The President, through the work of the Enterprise Advisory Board, envisages that an Enterprise track will be introduced as an alternative to INTRA. Identified learning outcomes and guidelines developed for INTRA-type projects/placements will aid the development of mirror guidelines and learning outcomes for the enterprise track. (Item 4.1.1)
- 3.15** Noted that work on the Business Intelligence pilot project is ongoing and that EC members are welcome to submit comments and suggestions about it to Ms Barbara McConalogue. Noted that 'Business Intelligence' is the appropriate technical term to be used in the context of the pilot. (Item 4.2)
- 3.16** Noted that the meeting to re-vision the AFI project had been very successful, that two approaches to flexible learning are currently under discussion, and that proposals on this issue would be submitted to the EC early in 2011. (Item 5.3)
- 3.17** Noted that the EC had, on 23 November 2010 and on the basis of electronic consideration, approved the title 'Postgraduate Diploma' for the exit award (following the completion of 60 credits) from the MSc in Organisational Change and Leadership Development which is being offered jointly with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Progress on EC goals:

4.1 Updated proposals on teaching quality evaluation

4.1.1 Noted that the proposals had been considered at the Heads' meeting of 18 November 2010 and that the Heads had emphasised the importance of ensuring that whatever system was introduced was fit for purpose and was not onerous from the administrative point of view. Noted that advice and information on the issue had been provided by the School of Education Studies, notably in respect of current international best practice, including an emphasis on the importance of a developmental and supportive approach. It was noted too that it was not unusual in many professions to require practitioners to maintain a level of continuing professional development annually in order to retain a licence to practice and that it was not unreasonable to expect that academic staff should also enhance their skills on a regular basis.

4.1.2 Agreed to revise the proposal on the issue to include the following: details of international best practice (to be developed following further consultation with the Head of the School of Education Studies); references to continuing professional development (as outlined above); references to the fact that teaching quality evaluation had been mentioned as a priority issue in the recent Institutional Review of the University as well as in the previous review in 2005. Agreed that it would be important to ensure that the proposed support workshops for staff were made available prior to the implementation of any evaluation mechanism.

4.1.3 Members of the EC are requested to submit comments and suggestions on the matter to Ms Jean Hughes with a view to having a revised proposal ready for submission to Academic Council for consideration, with a request for approval, at its meeting of 8 December 2010. The views of the Heads will also be ascertained again at the Heads' meeting of 9 December 2010. The intention is then to bring recommendations to Executive with a request for approval.

4.2 Report and proposals from the working group on graduate attributes

Approved subject to the rewording of the statement which amplifies the reference to 'Ethical and Professional Standards' so that it refers to students having gained a comprehensive understanding of such standards rather than students upholding such standards (on the basis that it can never be guaranteed that every student will uphold them in every instance). Noted that the term 'digital intelligence' is now a generally recognised one. Agreed that the proposals should now be made available

to Faculties in line with the schedule of actions outlined in the report, with a request that, if any problems were identified, Faculties should make Dr Bohan aware of them. Agreed that the report and proposals should be brought to the attention of Executive at its meeting of 7 December 2010. Agreed that, after the completion of the approval procedures as described in the schedule of actions in the report, the descriptions of the means by which students are enabled to develop the attributes, through their programme of study, should be integrated into accreditation proposals. The Chair thanked Dr Bohan and the other members of the working group on graduate attributes for the very considerable work they had carried out.

4.3 Report on projected student profile and numbers, and discussion on retention issues

4.3.1 Noted, in respect of the students identified as being ‘at risk’ in 2009/10, that 60% (116) had remained in DCU, with 41% of the 116 having progressed to Year 2 of the original programme, 57% having undertaken to repeat Year 1 of the original programme and 2% having transferred to Year 1 of a different programme. Noted that, while January was a relatively late month in the academic year in which to introduce support interventions for such students, these interventions would appear to have been at least partially successful. Noted however that, while non-attendance at lectures and other academic activities is not a problem specific to the University, the trends in some areas of the University are worrying and need to be addressed. (It was also noted in this connection that technology now affords students many more ways of obtaining information than attendance at academic activities, and it was suggested that this very proliferation of options may have the effect of confusing and alienating students.)

4.3.2 In the course of discussion, it was noted that, while on the one hand academic staff have a responsibility to make every effort to engage students, on the other students also need to take responsibility for their learning.

4.3.3 The importance of ensuring that students are aware that they are welcome to re-engage with study, even following a period of non-engagement or poor engagement, was noted. In this connection, it was agreed to take the following steps immediately:

- an e-mail will be sent to all students to remind them of the support mechanisms available
- this will be reinforced by messages on social networking media (e.g. Facebook and Twitter), with the specific media used to be based on advice from the Students’ Union sabbatical officers
- a text message, along similar lines, will be sent to all students (in this connection, the advice of the Secretary has been sought about the legal position

of the University with regard to the sending of text messages to individual students as distinct from generic text messages; a discussion also took place about the ways in which students in difficulty could be identified, e.g. by noting those who had not engaged with Moodle for several weeks)

- where Programme Chairs consider that it would be helpful, a letter, along similar lines, will be posted to students
- the information will also be integrated into the standard weekly e-mails sent out to all students by Student Support and Development
- a 'revision opportunity' (or related title) will be organised, prior to the Semester 1 examinations, to which all students will be invited, and it will include details of the above as well as encouragement to avail of support mechanisms with a view to re-engaging with the programme
- an alert message in relation to the above matters will be placed on the students' portal pages
- a communication will be sent to Programme Chairs and other stakeholders to alert them to the following:
 - the actions outlined above, so that they will be in a position to respond without delay to communications from students
 - the apparent increased anxiety levels among students
 - the importance of making feedback on assignments available in a timely fashion
 - the need to make students aware of staff availability in the study period prior to the Semester 1 examinations
 - the need to restate module and programme learning outcomes, and their links to assessment, well in advance of assignment submission dates
 - the importance of reminding students about marking grids, where they exist
 - the importance of reminding students about the resources available on Moodle.

4.3.4 Agreed that the various forms of communication would be co-ordinated to ensure that a consistent message is sent out. The Chair will liaise with Dr Bohan, Mr Molony and the Students' Union sabbatical officers on the composition of the text. It will include a request that students ensure that their classmates (some of whom may not be engaging with their programme) are made aware of the supports available.

4.3.5 Agreed that the student advice clinics organised by the Students' Union and Student Support and Development should be supported, and seen to be so, by University management

4.3.6 Agreed that students who had withdrawn from the University, either formally or informally, would be contacted to ascertain the reasons for this (and noted too that such students might in many cases have made decisions that had positive outcomes

for them in that they had initially chosen an institution and/or programme that was not suited to their needs).

4.3.7 Noted that the work to follow up the progress of ‘at risk’ students, which had commenced in 2009/10, would continue.

4.3.8 Agreed that, in the case of individual modules in respect of which there appeared to be a high level of poor performance and/or failure, the Deans of Faculty would be alerted so as to enable them to highlight to Heads of School/Programme Chairs and relevant module co-ordinators in order to ensure that appropriate interventions are put in place. Ms McKenna had provided this information to the Deans last year and confirmed that she had recirculated this data to the Deans last week.

4.3.9 Agreed that work would continue to develop a standard method of inputting information (e.g. on learning outcomes and assessment methods) on Coursebuilder for the information of students.

4.4 Proposals on the integration of teaching and research

Deferred to the 12 January 2011 meeting of the EC, by which time it is intended that feedback from discussions about this issue will be available from all Faculties.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

5. Brief summary of ‘Placing Bologna in Context’ conference, October 2010

Deferred to the 12 January 2011 meeting of the EC.

6. Proposal on a Level 8 framework to meet future calls for funding under the HEA Labour Market Activation Initiative

Approved. Noted that it would now need to be developed.

7. Proposal on Business International programme

Approved.

8. Proposal to refocus the previously-validated subject ‘Science Studies’ in St Patrick’s College

Approved.

9. Stand-alone modules in online teaching, OVPLI

Approved.

10. For noting: Inter-Institutional Collaborative Agreement: Fourth Level Ireland

Noted that this had now been signed by the Registrars of the universities.

11. Proposal to recognise the Institute of Education International Foundation Programme

Approved. The following were agreed: information about this issue will be made available to Programme Chairs and other stakeholders so that enquirers can be alerted to the existence of the programme, and its recognition by the University, as appropriate; the progress of the students admitted through the programme will be monitored. Noted that it would be desirable for the University to develop its own programme, along the same lines as the Institute of Education programme, in due course.

12. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 12 January 2011, 2.00 p.m. in A204

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____