EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 3 March 2010

2.00-4.40 p.m. in A204

Present:	Mr Jim Dowling (Chair), Dr Claire Bohan, Professor Eithne Guilfoyle, Mr Billy Kelly, Professor Eugene Kennedy, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Kay MacKeogh
Apologies:	Professor Anne Scott, Mr John Murphy, Professor Richard O'Kennedy, Professor Bernard Pierce, Dr Mary Shine Thompson, Professor Malcolm Smyth
In attendance:	Ms Morag Munro and Dr Declan Raftery (for Item 4.3) Mr Seamus Fox (for Item 6) Dr Sheelagh Wickham

The Chair welcomed Mr Billy Kelly to his first meeting of the Education Committee in his capacity as representative of the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education.

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 3 February 2010

The minutes were confirmed subject to the addition of a reference to the Faculty of Engineering and Computing in the second sentence of Item 4.2.2 so that it reads: 'Mr Dowling undertook to arrange for the views of a range of external stakeholders, including industry stakeholders and guidance counsellors, to be ascertained with respect to the Faculty of Engineering and Computing.'

They were then signed by the Chair.

3.   Matters arising from the minutes

3.1   Noted that a proposal on AP(E)L would now be submitted for consideration by the University Standards Committee at its meeting of 3 June 2010. (Item 3.1)

3.2   A paper on the role of the Head of School and responsibility for programmes, prepared by Dr Noel Murphy, Head of the School of Electronic Engineering, on the basis of discussions that took place during the Quality Review of the Faculty of Engineering and Computing in September 2009 was noted. It was noted that the material in this paper would be factored into future discussions in the Faculty and, perhaps, more widely. (Item 3.3)

3.3   Noted that the EC would be requested, at its meeting of 7 April 2010, to make a recommendation on the desirability, or otherwise, of having minutes taken at Progression and Awards Boards. (Item 3.6)

3.4   With regard to the Teaching Enhancement Cycle, it was noted that Ms Morag Munro, Acting Head of the Learning Innovation Unit, had by now invited all academic staff to participate. It was noted that the usefulness of the Cycle as a quality assurance mechanism was limited by the fact that participation is voluntary and, while Heads of School should encourage wide participation, especially by those who would not have tended to participate in teaching enhancement activities in the past, consideration might need to be given also to developing a university-wide, possibly mandatory, system of carrying out quality assurance with respect to teaching. (Item 3.7)

3.5   Noted that a working group of the University Standards Committee had been convened to make recommendations on a number of issues relating to approval of programmes and that these recommendations would be submitted to both the USC and the EC for approval. The work will encompass the drawing up of a template for CVs of nominees to Accreditation Boards.   (Items 3.8 and 10.1)

3.6   Noted that the preparations for the accreditation of the proposed Graduate Diploma/MSc in Materials Engineering were ongoing, subject to the continued involvement of the proposed partner organisation, Athlone Institute of Technology. Noted that, while the issue of due diligence did not arise with respect to this proposed joint activity with AIT, in a more general sense it would be important to ensure, when carrying out due diligence, that a proposed partnership with an external organisation did not depend unduly on the commitment of a sole staff member in that organisation. (Item 3.10)

3.7   Noted that the preparations for the accreditation of the proposed subject *Science Studies* on the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education programmes in St Patrick's College were ongoing, though some changes to the subject as originally validated were under consideration. (Item 3.11)

3.8   Noted that some meetings between Oscail and Faculty representatives to discuss areas of possible collaboration had taken place and others were being organised. (Item 3.14)

3.9   Noted that a report would be made to the 7 April 2010 meeting of the EC on the possibilities offered by the Academic Framework for Innovation in respect of flexible module/programme provision. (Item 3.15)

3.10   Noted that the President had been invited to join a group of university heads to make recommendations about the criteria to be used in the THE-Thomson Reuters World University Rankings 2010. Agreed that the issue of rankings would be discussed at the next meeting of Deans of Faculty.   Noted that various organisations were currently working towards the development of new rankings criteria, among them the OECD and CHERPA (the Consortium for Higher Education and Research Performance Assessment).   (Item 3.16)

3.11   Noted that a location on the OVPLI website would be identified at which documentation of interest to the EC would be posted on a regular basis. (Item 3.17)

3.12   Noted that the programme proposers for the BSc in Health Studies would, as requested by the Validation Subgroup and the EC in January 2010, make available a document outlining likely demand for the proposed programme and that this document would be submitted to the 7 April 2010 meeting of the EC.   Noted that dates for the meeting of the Accreditation Board were being discussed. Noted that, in future, where the Validation Subgroup/EC makes a recommendation that relates to internal university matters and is not suited to being addressed in an accreditation proposal, a report on how and when the recommendation has been addressed will be made by the programme proposers to the EC at the time the programme goes for accreditation. (Item 3.18)

3.13   Noted that the additional information which had been requested about the proposed restructuring of the MSc in Bioinformatics would now be made available to the EC at its meeting of 7 April 2010 provided it was agreed by the Faculty of Engineering and Computing. (Item 10)

3.14   Dr MacKeogh presented the results of the survey she had recently carried out to ascertain the views of Oscail students on a variety of issues. The Chair thanked her for the work completed to date. In the ensuing discussion, it was <u>noted</u> that it would be very helpful if the results were accompanied by a summary of the main issues identified, what had been learnt from the exercise and how the learning could be applied to the survey when carried out in the Faculties. It was <u>noted</u> also that the outcomes of the Institutional Review of DCU, currently in progress, might influence the further development of the survey. It was <u>agreed</u> that, prior to its being used in the Faculties, Dr MacKeogh would send it to the Deans, who would forward it to the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education so that it could be discussed at Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees. It is envisaged that the Faculty surveys will be carried out in time for a report on the survey process and outcomes generally to be made to the EC at its meeting of 5 May 2010. (Item 4.1.2)

3.15   <u>Noted</u> that a report on emerging subject areas would be made to the EC at its meeting of 7 April 2010 and that it would be informed by any outcomes of the ongoing Institutional Review that might be of relevance. (Item 4.4)

3.16   <u>Noted</u> that Mr Gordon McConnell was in the process of making available on line information for those undertaking the preparation of joint programme proposals with other institutions, the aim being to assist those charged with drawing up Memoranda of Understanding. (Item 5)

3.17   <u>Noted</u> that the electronic accreditation of the restructured Bachelor of Nursing Studies programme was in progress. (Item 8)

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4.   Report on progress of EC goals 2009/10

4.1   Programme 'health check'

It was <u>noted</u> that Ms Aisling McKenna, Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, had been in discussion with some of the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education about the relevance of the 'health check' data to the ongoing programme review process and that she had provided Faculty-specific data for 2008/09 which could be tested for fitness for purpose as part of this review process in March 2010. It was <u>noted</u> also that the 'health check' information constituted one element of the data required for the review process rather than the full set of data.

4.2   Report from Subgroup on DCU student profile and graduate characteristics

4.2.1   Dr MacKeogh made available an updated document on student profiles across a range of institutions both nationally and internationally, and Dr Bohan made available recommendations on desired graduate qualities from Flinders University, Australia. The following points were then made by members of the EC:

- discussions are taking place between Subgroup members and a range of other staff members to identify the skills with which students are currently being provided and the means by which this is done and to benchmark this information against national norms and identify gaps, if any
- in carrying out its work, the Subgroup is mindful of the importance of not creating undue pressure on staff and students in terms of activities such as completion of questionnaires and participation in focus groups
- it would be helpful to give consideration to benchmarking the university against (a) universities that are similar to DCU at this point and (b) universities DCU might emulate
- the OVPR (specifically, Dr Niamh O'Dowd) is in a position to provide bibliometric information which might be helpful in comparing certain aspects of DCU's performance against the performance of other universities.

4.2.2   The Chair requested the members of the EC to provide feedback to the Subgroup on the issues raised with a view to informing its deliberations. It was noted that the outcomes of the ongoing Institutional Review might also have a bearing on the work of the Subgroup.

4.3   Research-led teaching

Ms Morag Munro, Acting Head of the Learning Innovation Unit, and Dr Declan Raftery, Director of Research Support Services, made a presentation on integrating teaching and research which included nine recommendations. The following points were made in the ensuing discussion:

- it is preferable to refer to 'the integration of teaching and research' rather than 'research-led teaching'
- the recommendation that budgetary information should clearly indicate the contribution of teaching and research in the RGAM model is particularly important
- ideally, research students and postdoctoral researchers should teach only if they specifically wish to do so (this may be subject to the stipulations of the Research Career Framework, when implemented)

- where standard teaching opportunities are not available, consideration might be given to identifying types of tasks that are available and that would enable research students and postdoctoral researchers to reflect on the applicability of their research to teaching
- to facilitate the above, consideration might be given to the setting up of a volunteering framework such as exists for undergraduate students.

The Chair thanked Ms Munro and Dr Raftery for their presentation.

5.   Student persistence on, and progression through, programmes

5.1   Dr Claire Bohan made a presentation these issues, drawing on a range of material including data provided by Ms Aisling McKenna and details of Semester 1 2009/10 module results made available by Dr MacKeogh. The following points were made in the ensuing discussion:

- the reasons students fail modules are many and complex
- students should be encouraged to avail of post-examination feedback as fully as possible, and the possibility of transferring to other programmes should be raised where appropriate (see also Item 5.4 below)
- notwithstanding the above, it is important to give students feedback early in the academic year, before they sit examinations, e.g. by November
- consideration might usefully be given to correlating (a) data on failed modules with data about the wrong programme choice having been made and (b) CAO preferences with data about the wrong programme choice having been made
- consideration might be given to alternative approaches to marking such as normalising all results (though this would be problematic with respect to failed modules) or specifying areas of baseline competence which could be graded on a pass/fail basis
- in reports on examination results, it is always useful to have information on mean and standard deviation included.

5.2   The proposed 'exit interview' form drafted by Dr Claire Bohan and intended for use by Student Support and Development was <u>approved</u> subject to any further feedback which the members of the EC might wish to submit after the meeting. Dr Bohan is to discuss with Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Director of Registry, the possibility of including on the withdrawal form used by Registry a reference to the desirability, for the student, of contacting the Student Advice Centre (for general advice and to activate the exit interview).

5.3   It was <u>agreed</u> that Dr Bohan would carry out further work on the development of three additional pieces of documentation: a booklet for staff to outline the student support services which are available; an 'interview form' for staff, including, but

not confined to, personal tutors, to ensure that all relevant topics are covered in discussions with students; a leaflet to be made generally available and to outline what student support services are available in relation to deferrals, transfers and other major landmarks, including deadlines (to ensure that information is transmitted about the importance for students of making decisions in a timely fashion to maximise eligibility for 'free fees' in future years).

5.4   It was <u>agreed</u> that the Deans would, through discussion with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education, Heads of Schools and Programme Chairs, identify what action had been taken in relation to modules deemed problematic (defined as modules with a failure rate of 25% or over in the Semester 1 examinations), and would report on this to the 5 May 2010 meeting of the EC. It was <u>noted</u> that the students who had been identified as being 'at risk' (defined as having failed two or more modules in the Semester 1 examinations) were being followed up locally and that it might be helpful to ask them if they had considered transferring to a different programme (see also Item 5.1 above).

6.   Report on the HEA Labour Market Activisation Initiative

Mr Seamus Fox, Academic Director of Oscail, reported that the next call for submissions under the Initiative had not yet been made (although it had been expected on 26 February), <u>noting</u> that once the call came out he would contact all relevant staff members via the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education. It is thought this next call may be aimed at meeting the needs of full-time as well as part-time students, may specify a sum per student to be paid annually until graduation and may be confined to programmes up to and including Level 8; however, it is not possible to be certain about the details until the call comes. It was suggested that, to facilitate agility of response to calls of this kind, a generic outline programme could be validated and accredited which could be populated with relevant modules as and when necessary.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

7.   Validation proposal: BSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy

7.1   <u>Agreed</u> to submit this proposal for detailed consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 9 March 2010.

7.2   The following were <u>noted</u> as being among the issues to be discussed by the
          Subgroup:
- a question arises as to the NFQ level of the Foundation Year and Diploma offered by the proposed partner organisation, the IICP (Institute of Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy), and whether or not they have been aligned to the Framework
- a question arises as to the attribution of 80 credits to the proposed academic year, rather than the more usual 60
- further detail will be required about the management of the proposed programme from DCU's perspective, in terms of closeness of co-ordination and aligning of standards between DCU and IICP
- to date, the School of Education Studies has not been involved in delivering programmes in Psychotherapy.

7.3   <u>Noted</u> that, for proposals which involve a proposed partner organisation, the
          due diligence on the proposed partner should normally be carried out prior to, rather
          than concurrently with, validation, but that the present programme proposers had
          been permitted to undertake the two processes concurrently for reasons of timing
          which resulted from the newness of the due diligence policy.

8.   Validation proposal: MA in Ethics

          <u>Noted</u> that this proposal appeared to be a timely and necessary one and that it was
          particularly well presented and clearly written. <u>Noted</u> that a financial issue was
          outstanding. <u>Agreed</u> to submit the proposal for detailed consideration by the
          Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 9 March 2010.

**9.   CVs for the nominees to the Accreditation Board for the proposed MSc in
          Organisational Change and Leadership Development**

          <u>Approved.</u>

10.   Any other business

10.1   It was <u>noted</u> that it was intended to offer the subject *Human Development* on both a
          full- and a part-time basis on the MA in Humanities in St Patrick's College from
          2011/12.

10.2   The Chair <u>noted</u> with concern the comments made by senior staff members of Google Ireland about the quality of Irish university graduates and said he would be meeting Google Ireland representatives to discuss the issue.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 7 April 2010, 2.00 p.m. in A204

Signed: _____   Date: _____

         Chair