

## **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

Wednesday 3 November 2010

2.00-3.40 p.m. in A204

**Present:** Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Claire Bohan, Mr Jim Dowling, Professor Eithne Guilfoyle, Ms Jean Hughes, Mr Billy Kelly, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Professor Richard O’Kennedy, Professor Bernard Pierce, Professor Malcolm Smyth

**Apologies:** Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh

**In attendance:** Ms Aisling McKenna

#### **SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of one submission under Item 7.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of 6 October 2010**

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**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 the Memoranda of Understanding with partner institutions in relation to the MSc in Bioinformatics had been completed. (Item 3.2)

- 3.3** 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. The issue will also be on the agenda for the EC meeting of 1 December 2010. (Item 3.3)
- 3.4** Noted that the issue of the integration of teaching and research would be on the agenda of the EC in the near future. (Item 3.4)
- 3.5** Noted that the accreditation process for the MSc in Bioprocess Engineering had been completed. (Item 3.5)
- 3.6** Noted that the issue of projected student numbers and profile would be on the agenda of the EC for its meeting of 1 December 2010. (Item 3.6)
- 3.7** Noted that the action plan following the institutional review of DCU in March 2010 is being prepared. (Item 3.7)
- 3.8** Noted that an application for Erasmus Mundus funding would be resubmitted by the School of Physical Sciences. (Item 3.8)
- 3.9** Noted that the IUA proposal on bonus points for Leaving Certificate Higher Level Mathematics had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 13 October 2010. (Item 3.9)
- 3.10** Noted that the working group on the provision of information and guidelines for Programme Chairs had held its first meeting and was due to meet again on 22 November 2010. (Item 3.10)
- 3.11** 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)
- 3.12** Noted that the issue of the provision of a cover sheet on Erasmus forms had been subsumed into a broader issue about which Dr Bohan and the Deans of Faculty are in discussion. (Item 3.11)
- 3.13** Noted that it was intended to submit the recommendations of the working group on graduate attributes to the EC for consideration at its meeting of 1 December 2010 and that, subsequently, the opinions of employers would be sought and an exercise

- conducted in Faculties to ascertain what is currently being done to foster the development of the attributes and how their development can be identified and measured. The intention is that full information about the attributes, how they are fostered and how their acquisition can be measured will be available from September 2011. (Item 3.12)
- 3.14** Noted that the report from the Skills and Training Subcommittee of IBEC would be made available to the EC as soon as it was published (which would probably be no later than early December 2010). (See also Item 4.1.3 below.) (Item 3.12)
- 3.15** Noted that the student advice clinics run by the Students' Union in conjunction with Student Support and Development provided an opportunity to draw attention to relevant issues such as the existence of the extenuating circumstances mechanism. Noted that the poll conducted by Dr Bohan to establish the usefulness of the weekly e-mails to students had indicated a substantial level of engagement with the e-mails and a view that they provided a reminder about the services available, a way of measuring personal progress and a support mechanism for students with difficulties. 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. (Items 5.1.2, 5.1.3 and 5.1.6)
- 3.16** Noted that discussions about the ease of use of the DCU website for students had concluded. (Item 5.1.4)
- 3.17** Noted that a report on the personal tutor system would be submitted for the consideration of Executive at its meeting of 8 November 2010<sup>1</sup>. (See also Item 4.3 below.) (Item 5.1.6)
- 3.18** Noted that Dr Bohan was in the process of identifying all the personal/professional development modules currently available in the University through scrutiny of the website and through discussion with Programme Chairs, the Library and the Careers Service, and that she intended to hold a meeting of the co-ordinators of all these modules and other relevant staff members with a view to developing a twelve-week online orientation module. The relevance of this issue to the ongoing discussions on INTRA (see Item 4.1 below) was noted. (Item 5.1.7)

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, this report was submitted for the consideration of Executive at its meeting of 30 November 2010.

- 3.19** Noted that Ms McKenna would circulate to the Deans and the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education the current registration status of ‘at-risk’ students on the basis of updated registration information post 1 November 2010 and would also submit a summary report on the issue to the 1 December 2010 meeting of the EC. The recent HEA report, *A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education*, had indicated that student performance in Mathematics and, to a lesser extent, English at second level were good indicators of likely academic performance in higher education. (Item 5.1.8)
- 3.20** Noted that Ms McKenna had circulated to the Deans information on the prior academic achievements in DCU of students who had failed final-year modules in 2010/11. It indicated that, while the students in question tended not to be the strongest students from an academic perspective they had, by and large, not failed previous academic sessions. (Item 5.1.8)
- 3.21** Noted, in relation to the further work to be done to ensure that module descriptors are written to the highest standard possible, that only a minority of Schools had approached the OVPLI with requests for advice on how to carry out the revisions. Noted that Professor O’Kennedy intended to contact Schools individually about this matter to ensure that all modules completed the approval procedure and that Ms Hughes was in discussion with the Coursebuilder administrator in Cork with a view to obtaining a report on the current status of all modules. Agreed that it would be important for the Deans of Faculty to ensure progress on this issue, e.g. by raising it at Faculty Management Boards. The extensive and detailed work carried out by Mr Billy Kelly and colleagues in DCU Business School in relation to the standards of DCUBS modules was noted with approval. (Item 5.2.2)
- 3.22** Noted that the paper on teaching quality evaluation which had been considered by the EC at its meeting of 6 October 2010 would be submitted for consideration to the Heads’ meeting of 18 November 2010 and that a revised version of it, incorporating the observations of the Heads, would be submitted for consideration by the EC at its meeting of 1 December 2010 and then (including further amendments, if appropriate) by Academic Council at its meeting of 8 December 2010. The issue of teaching quality evaluation was flagged as an item for discussion at Academic Council at its meeting of 13 October 2010. In the context of the discussion on whether in-house provision for a teaching qualification for staff could be made, Ms Hughes undertook to circulate to the EC the information on pooled modules developed by the Dublin Centre for Academic Development. (Item 5.3)
- 3.23** Noted that the template provided by the IUQB in preparation for its forthcoming site visit to the University (as part of its ongoing exercise to ascertain programme approval procedures across the sector) had been completed and that preparations for the visit (on 15 December 2010) were in progress. (Item 6)

- 3.24** Noted that the CVs of the proposed members of the Accreditation Board for the electronic re-accreditation of the BSc in Nursing had been approved electronically by the EC on 18 October 2010 and that the accreditation was in progress. (Item 7)

## **SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **4. Updated information on some EC goals:**

#### **4.1 Discussions about INTRA**

- 4.1.1** Noted that a working group consisting of the Chair, Mr Dowling, Mr Byrne and Ms Maeve Long, Head of INTRA (and shortly also to include the Chair of the recently convened Enterprise Advisory Committee) was meeting to make recommendations about the future development of INTRA, and that these recommendations would be submitted for the consideration of the EC in due course. Discussions are also taking place with the AFI team in the context of the development of learning outcomes and with Dr Bohan in the context of the development of a statement of graduate attributes and a dedicated orientation module.
- 4.1.2** Some issues of relevance were noted: as indicated in the recent HEA/IRCHSS report, *Playing to our Strengths: the role of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and Implications for Public Policy*, there is a need for INTRA placements in these areas as well as in areas more traditionally associated with placements; in the current difficult economic environment, there may be a tendency for employers to prefer to take on only the highest achievers from an academic perspective and to avoid taking on students from outside the European Economic Area (though Government policy is likely to move in the direction of allowing such students to take on year-long INTRA commitments without prejudicing their visa status).
- 4.1.3** It was noted that, in future, performance at INTRA may be graded (as is currently the case with Engineering placements, and as may become increasingly important in the light of the discussions on measuring graduate attributes). The issue arises of how to manage the workload involved in this. There are also possible alternatives to INTRA, e.g. wider use of in-house projects (though the potential for deterring students who choose DCU largely on the basis of INTRA would need to be factored in to discussions about this) or use of a generic Enterprise module, with standardised learning outcomes, as a means of fulfilling some of the INTRA requirements. Noted that the current feedback mechanisms in respect of INTRA would, following agreement in respect of the matters relating to graduate attributes, be subsumed into the graduate attribute evaluation mechanism. Noted that the working group on INTRA would give consideration to submitting its final report to employers for comment. Agreed that the final report would be submitted for the

consideration of the EC at its meeting of 12 January 2010. The report from the Skills and Training Subcommittee of IBEC was noted as being of particular relevance to INTRA also. (See also Item 3.12 above.)

## **4.2 Briefing paper on MIS system**

**4.2.1** It was agreed, on the basis of advice from Ms Barbara McConalogue, Director of Information Systems and Services, to use the term ‘Business Intelligence’ rather than ‘Management Information’ henceforth.

**4.2.2** Current developments were noted: a steering group is being established to oversee the pilot project, and it will have a student data subgroup and a research subgroup with a view to establishing the extent and nature of the information required; also, an exercise to establish proof of concept in respect of the system to be used for the pilot is under way. It was noted that any system ultimately selected would need to be flexible and comprehensive enough to support strategic decision-making and to provide information on the results of decisions (e.g. decisions as to which countries to focus on from the point of view of international recruitment). It was noted also that a balance would need to be struck between providing a system at the lowest reasonable cost, ensuring it is fit for purpose in terms of the information it can supply and ensuring that in-house expertise is available to support it in the longer term. It was agreed that the progress on the pilot scheme would be made known at EC meetings on an ongoing basis, with a comprehensive report being submitted for consideration in due course.

## **4.3 Issues relating to feedback to students**

Noted that a number of actions relating to this matter were under way or due to be implemented shortly: the standard consultation process following the publication of the provisional Semester 1 examination results; the mechanism agreed by Academic Council at its meeting of 10 February 2010 for publicising staff availability to students; the ongoing discussions about the personal tutor system and teaching quality evaluation; the student advice clinics. In relation to the personal tutor system, it was agreed that the views of the President of the Students’ Union would be sought. (See also Item 3.17 above.) It was agreed that the issue of student feedback would be monitored on an ongoing basis by the EC.

## **5. AFI: future developments**

**5.1** A presentation on the re-visioning of AFI was made by Ms Hughes and Professor O’Kennedy. In the ensuing discussion, the following were noted:

- centralised timetabling is essential to the creation of flexibility of module choice
- the availability of a flexible business intelligence system is also essential

- were flexible systems to be implemented on a pilot basis, it would be necessary to ensure that both they and traditional systems could co-exist
- it is essential to assess optional modules so that students will engage with them
- it might be helpful to consider providing incentives for staff to develop their modules on an online basis
- there are connections to be made with the concept of the university of enterprise as articulated by the President, Professor Brian MacCraith.

**5.2** It was agreed that serious consideration should be given to articulating a level of flexibility to be made available to students, and defining this as University policy. For example, a half-day per week could be set aside for the provision of modules in areas such as entrepreneurship, ethics, communications, organisational behaviour and sustainability. A request could be made that programmes devote 10%-15% of their credits to such modules (with due account taken of programme learning outcomes and with provision made for a lower percentage where considerations of external professional accreditation might make this necessary). Such a system could be implemented on a pilot basis from September 2011, and plans made for a centralised timetabling system to be developed and implemented at a later date.

**5.3** It was agreed to factor the issues at 5.1 and 5.2 above into the deliberations of the group conducting the AFI re-visioning exercise on 11 November 2010.

## **SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES**

### **6. Proposal relating to the membership of the Education Committee**

The proposal that the Director of Quality Promotion become a member of the EC with immediate effect was approved.

### **7. Any other business**

It was noted that previous calls for funding under the Labour Market Activation Scheme had been relatively unsuitable for the University and that it would be important to have a flexible Level 8 framework in place in the event that any future call for such funding would encompass Level 8 programmes. This framework could encompass a number of generic modules, e.g. in areas such as project management, communications or business development, and specific programmes could then be developed through the addition of specific modules. It was agreed that Mr Kelly and Mr Seamus Fox, Academic Director of Oscail, would draw up a proposal on this matter for the consideration of the EC at its meeting of 1 December 2010.

**Date of next meeting:**

**Wednesday 1 December 2010, 2.00 p.m. in A204**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

Date: \_\_\_\_\_