

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 3 December 2008

2.00-4.00 p.m. in AG01

- Present:** Professor Maria Slowey (Chair), Dr Claire Bohan, Mr Jim Dowling, Dr Mike Hopkins, Ms Susan Hurley, Professor Eugene Kennedy, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Kay MacKeogh, Professor Bernard Pierce, Professor Anne Scott, Professor Malcolm Smyth
- Apologies:** Dr Françoise Blin, Professor Eithne Guilfoyle, Mr Gordon McConnell, Dr Mary Shine Thompson
- In attendance:** Dr Heinz Lechleiter, Director of Quality Promotion (for Item 4)
Mr Eamonn Cuggy, Finance Officer (for Item 7)

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 29 October 2008

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Noted that a proposal for a Certificate in Operations and Technology Management had been approved for validation by the Academic Strategy Committee (and subsequently by Academic Council). Noted that some changes had subsequently been made to it with the result that it was conceived of as a major award at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications, attracting 120 credits and named a

‘Higher Certificate’. While the EC expressed its appreciation to the programme proposers for the detailed work they had carried out in seeking to align the programme appropriately with the NQF, it recommended that the proposed changes not be implemented pending the outcomes of wider discussion about alignment issues within the university. Agreed, therefore, that the accreditation report to be submitted for approval to Academic Council, in respect of the meeting of the Accreditation Board which had taken place on 26 November 2008 (and which had recommended the programme for launch), would be accompanied by a memorandum from the EC to the Council to recommend that the programme be launched as a ‘Certificate’ at Level 7 on the NFQ and with a 60-credit rating.

Agreed that it would be helpful for the EC to have a summary of all the relevant issues with regard to alignment with the NFQ and that such a summary should be drawn up.

Noted also that a comprehensive discussion of these issues would be undertaken by the University Standards Committee.

(Item 7 from the final meeting of the Academic Strategy Committee of 7 May 2008)

- 3.2** Noted that the Director of Finance had advised that the response to the HEA on its proposals for allocating RGAM weightings to students on work placements not yet be submitted because additional information from the HEA about this matter was awaited. The Chair expressed appreciation to all those who had assisted in preparing the draft response, particularly Mr Jim Dowling. (Item 3.2)
- 3.3** Noted that the draft terms of reference of the EC, which had been approved by Executive, with some amendments, at its meeting of 18 November 2008, were to be submitted for approval by the Academic Council at its meeting of 10 December 2008. (Item 4.1)
- 3.4** Noted that the International Office had indicated that discussions with Schools were in progress with a view to devising strategies to encourage DCU students to avail of opportunities to study abroad during their programmes. (Item 5)
- 3.5** Noted, in the case of the validation proposal for the addition of an English-language stream to the BA in International Business and Languages, that following EC approval of this proposal at its meeting of 29 October 2008 a change to the entry requirements in terms of English-language examination performance had been proposed (with a view to ensuring parity between applicants presenting results for Leaving Certificate English and applicants presenting results in other English-language examinations). This change was approved electronically by the EC and is

reflected in the validation report to be submitted for approval by the Academic Council at its meeting of 10 December 2008. (Item 7)

- 3.6** Noted that a new undergraduate degree in Psychology was under consideration, involving the School of Nursing and a range of other areas (St Patrick's College, Oscail, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Dublin City University Business School). Agreed that this concept appeared to be a very interesting one with considerable potential for building on existing strengths, meeting student demand and facilitating cross-Faculty and cross-institutional collaboration. Agreed also that, in view of the importance of ensuring a very high-quality proposal and facilitating approval from the range of parties involved, it would be more appropriate to consider launching the programme in 2010 than in 2009. (Item 8)

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Programme review

- 4.1** Dr Heinz Lechleiter, Director of Quality Promotion, summarised the stipulations on internal quality assurance as well as approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards contained in the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), noting that higher education institutions within the European Higher Education Area would be obliged to implement measures to meet these stipulations with effect from 2010.
- 4.2** The following points were noted in discussion: there is significant awareness within the university of the importance of internal quality assurance and programme review; it will be important to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place; significant review of programmes is already in train in the context of the learning outcomes exercise being undertaken as part of the development of the Academic Framework for Innovation; programmes need to be reviewed in terms of, on the one hand, viability and strategic alignment and, on the other, appropriateness of academic content; Programme Boards provide a valuable service in ensuring ongoing review, but where cyclical review is required their expertise needs to be supplemented by other mechanisms; the expertise of programme external examiners should be availed of, particularly as they reach the end of their terms of office and are in a position to provide overviews of programmes; the views of students should be ascertained in relation to both ongoing and cyclical review (with innovative technological methods being used as appropriate); it is also important to have mechanisms to address problems as they arise rather than leaving them to be resolved in the context of a scheduled review; the Quality Promotion Committee needs to have ongoing oversight of programme review mechanisms though it will not be involved in reviews of individual programmes.

- 4.3** Agreed to set up a working group to make recommendations on general principles to underpin the different levels of programme review across the university, including appropriate timescales for review. The group is to consist of the following: the Director of Quality Promotion, a member of staff from the Office of the Vice-President for Learning Innovation/Registrar; a representative of the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education; a Programme Chair; a representative of the E-Learning Development Initiative; the Research and Analysis Officer; a student representative.
- 4.4** A discussion also took place about student feedback on the quality of teaching, noted as a very important, though by no means the only, measure of such quality. Noted that many areas of good practice already existed and that it would be important to disseminate information about them. Agreed that the Chair would solicit the views of the Deans of Faculty on the issue of assuring and enhancing quality of teaching and would also commission a paper from the School of Education Studies which would outline current research in the area and form the basis of discussion at a future meeting of the EC.

5. Updated information on SIF funding

The Chair reported that, notwithstanding some cutbacks undertaken in the context of the current adverse economic climate, significant amounts of the SIF funding for 2008 and 2009, to cover commitments already entered into, would be made available. None the less, each institution will need to prioritise the activities it had planned to undertake using SIF funding, and following this exercise the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance (DRHEA) will need to prioritise the collaborative activities planned under SIF.

6. Strategic Plan – Learning Innovation component strategy

Discussion deferred pending the outcome of the meeting of the internal advisory group for the LI strategy, due to take place on 4 December 2008.

7. Presentation on proposed financial and resource planning mechanism for use with validation proposals

The mechanism was approved and was noted as having the potential to assist with the assessment of the financial viability of programmes generally as well as with the preparation of validation proposals. The Chair congratulated the members of the subgroup which had, at the invitation of the Academic Strategy Committee,

initiated the discussions about it, and paid particular tribute to the very significant contribution of Mr Eamonn Cuggy, Finance Officer. Agreed that the Chair would highlight the existence of the mechanism to Executive. Agreed that programme proposers should, from now on, be requested to use it in preparing validation proposals.

8. HEA Student Numbers Audit: Report of Panel on Assignment of Modules to Price Groups 2007/2008

Agreed that the Chair would discuss this issue with the Institutional Research and Analysis Officer and report to the EC on the outcome.

9. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting:

<p>Wednesday 14 January 2009, 2.00 p.m. in A204</p>
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Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____