

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 4 February 2009

2.00-3.45 p.m. in A204

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Françoise Blin, Dr Claire Bohan, Mr Jim Dowling, Ms Susan Hurley, Mr Gordon McConnell, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Kay MacKeogh, Professor Bernard Pierce, Dr Mary Shine Thompson, Professor Maria Slowey, Professor Malcolm Smyth

Apologies: Dr Mike Hopkins, Professor Eugene Kennedy

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 6.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 14 January 2009

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Noted that, following a decision of the Academic Council at its meeting of 10 December 2008, a number of revisions to an accreditation proposal were to be made by the programme proposers by 6 February 2009 and that the Council would be informed, at its meeting of 11 February 2009, that this task had been completed. (Item 3.1)

- 3.2** Noted that the IUA Registrars' Group were to discuss, at a forthcoming meeting, issues relating to the alignment of university awards with the National Framework of Qualifications. (Item 3.2)
- 3.3** Noted that a response had been sent to the HEA on the proposals for changing the RGAM weightings for students on work placement and that a copy of this response would be made available to the members of the EC. (Item 3.3)
- 3.4** Noted that the validation proposal for a BSc (Hons) in Aviation Management had been approved, with recommendations, by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 20 January 2009, that the Subgroup's recommendations had been approved in turn by the full EC membership and that the recommendations had been submitted to Academic Council for approval at its meeting of 11 February 2009. (Item 4.2)
- 3.5** Noted that a number of procedural issues had emerged in relation to the operation of the Validation Subgroup vis-à-vis the operation of the EC itself and that it would be important to ensure that any ensuing problems were resolved as soon as possible. The issues include: the time allocation for each programme proposal at the Subgroup meeting; the presence or otherwise of a Dean uninvolved in the proposal(s) under discussion; the need to allow time for consideration of *curricula vitae* of proposed members of Accreditation Boards, where necessary; the importance of ensuring articulation with deadlines for submission of validation reports for inclusion in Academic Council papers. Experience over forthcoming Subgroup meetings will indicate whether or not changes to procedures are required. A presentation on the new arrangements (the establishment of the Subgroup and related issues) is to be made to the Heads' meeting of 26 February 2009. Noted that the next meeting of the Subgroup will take place on 10 March 2009 at 11.00 a.m. (Item 4)
- 3.6** Noted that any changes which might be made to the Enhancement of Learning strategic plan, currently in draft form and to be discussed again by the EC at its meeting of 4 March 2009, would not cause logistical difficulties in relation to the finalisation of the university's new overall strategic plan. (Item 6.2)
- 3.7** Noted that information on the system for calculating module weightings, and a list of all currently approved modules with their weightings, had been made available to the EC by Ms Aisling McKenna, Institutional Research and Analysis Officer. Agreed that documentation outlining numbers of students registered for each module together with module weightings, previously circulated to each Dean in respect of his/her Faculty, would be made available to the full EC membership once a technical issue with one of the documents had been resolved. Noted that Dr Blin and Ms McKenna had discussed a number of issues relating to the way modules are coded in the ITS system. (Item 7.2)

**SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION
(including validation proposal deferred from the meeting of 14 January 2009)**

**4. Validation proposal: BSc (Hons) in Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing:
bridging programme to be delivered by distance mode**

4.1 Agreed to request the programme proposers to submit a revised proposal for consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 10 March 2009. The issues which the proposers are to be asked to address in the revised proposal are: the academic standing of the institution with which it is proposed to establish a relationship (since it is proposed that its graduates will form the student body); the extent of familiarity of relevant DCU staff with the institution; the strategic appropriateness, and likely strategic advantages, of the proposed relationship; the measures to be taken to safeguard proprietary rights in terms of DCU programme materials; the resources required to develop these materials; issues relating to programme content.

4.2 Noted that, while the International Office undertakes research, as required, about the academic standing of possible partner institutions the university does not have an overarching standard policy, or standard procedures, for carrying out due diligence in relation to this matter. Noted that a working paper on institutional linkages, discussed by Executive and the Heads' group in 2008, might provide a basis for the development of such a policy and that there was also a considerable depth of institutional experience in terms of partnerships which could be availed of. Mr McConnell undertook to prepare a draft policy for submission to the 4 March 2009 meeting of the EC.

4.3 Noted that, while the university has wide experience in evaluating transfer applications from students holding credits from other institutions, there is no policy with regard to the maximum number of such credits that can be accepted as contributing to a university award. This matter is under discussion sectorally (see Item 3.2 above). Agreed, however, that it would be very important for the university to have an institutional policy on it and that this was an urgent matter in the context of the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications and the development of the activities of the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance.

5. Programme review

5.1 The report from the working group established to make recommendations on programme review was noted, and the Chair thanked the members of the group for their contribution on the issue. It was agreed that the proposal in the report that a structured review of each programme be carried out annually was likely to be

- problematic in terms of workload. It was agreed to request the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education to consult the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees with a view to formulating recommendations on review, per Faculty, which would be submitted for discussion by the EC at its meeting of 4 March 2009. The consultation is to incorporate consideration of the following: the relevant sections of *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*; discussions taking place between the IUA Registrars' Group and the Directors of Quality in the universities about the implementation of *Standards and Guidelines*; advice from the Institutional Research and Analysis Officer on the provision of data relevant to reviews (including advice on the 'seven flags' system previously developed to provide quantitative data about programmes); the report from the working group referred to above; the need to ensure appropriate scrutiny and approval of proposed stand-alone modules (see Item 6.1 below) and modules proposed for introduction on to programmes after the completion of the accreditation process.
- 5.2** The importance of maintaining a clear distinction between programmes and awards, both for quality review purposes and more generally, was noted.
- 5.3** The close relationship between evaluation of teaching quality and programme review more generally was noted. It was agreed to request the working group on student feedback, which had been established in response to the recommendations of the Peer Review Group following the quality review of the first-year experience in 2008, to formulate recommendations on the evaluation of some aspects of teaching quality. The current members of the working group are Ms Deirdre Maloney of Student Support and Development, Ms Susan Hurley and Ms Aisling McKenna. Dr MacKeogh undertook to join the group and act as convenor and to request a member of the School of Education Studies, and the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in DCU Business School, to join it. The group is to take, as the basis for its discussions, the relevant sections of *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* as well as a paper on current international best practice in the field which the School of Education Studies is to be requested to submit. Dr MacKeogh will also request Dr Heinz Lechleiter, Director of Quality Promotion, to make available a summary of relevant recommendations from quality review visits. The possibility of requesting an expert external to the university to join the group may be considered in due course. Since DCU Business School has expressed an interest in making itself available for a pilot evaluation exercise in Semester 2 of 2008/2009, Dr MacKeogh is to submit the group's draft recommendations on terms of reference for teaching evaluation exercises to the Education Committee and, following approval, the pilot exercise is to take place. Dr MacKeogh and Professor Pierce will inform the EC of developments, at its meeting of 4 March 2009.

6. Any other business

- 6.1** Noted that proposed stand-alone modules are currently submitted for approval to the University Standards Committee, following approval within Faculties. The Chair suggested that, since the EC (including the Validation Subgroup) had specific expertise in evaluating programme proposals, it might be preferable to submit such proposed stand-alone modules to the EC rather than the USC. She requested the members of the EC to give consideration to this suggestion and to raise, at the meeting of 4 March 2009, any difficulties which it might appear to present. (Note, in connection with this matter, Item 5.1 above.) She noted the importance of Faculties taking responsibility, in approving stand-alone modules, for establishing the appropriateness of the content and learning outcomes to the proposed NFQ level as well as the suitability of the academic qualifications of those who intended to teach the modules.
- 6.2** Noted that the updated membership and terms of reference for the EC would shortly be made available on the university website.

Date of next meeting:

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| Wednesday 4 March 2009, 2.00 p.m. in A204 |
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Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____