

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

Wednesday 5 May 2010

2.00-4.20 p.m. in A204

**Present:** Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Claire Bohan, Mr Jim Dowling, Professor Eithne Guilfoyle, Mr Billy Kelly, Mr Gordon McConnell, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Mr John Murphy, Professor Richard O’Kennedy, Professor Bernard Pierce, Dr Mary Shine Thompson

**Apologies:** Professor Eugene Kennedy, Professor Malcolm Smyth

**In attendance:** Ms Aisling McKenna  
Dr Sheelagh Wickham  
Ms Barbara McConalogue (for items 1-6)  
Dr Noel Murphy and Mr David Molloy (for Item 6)

The Chair noted that Mr McConnell, Mr Murphy and Dr Shine Thompson were attending their last meeting of the Education Committee and, on behalf of the Committee, thanked them for their significant contributions to it since its inception.

**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 18.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of 7 April 2010**

The minutes were confirmed subject to the following:

the replacement of ‘too’ by ‘two’ in the second sentence of Item 4.2.1 and the deletion of the words ‘full time’ later in this same sentence.

They were then signed by the Chair.

### **3. Matters arising from the minutes**

**3.1** The following were noted as ongoing matters for discussion/review/implementation:

- proposals on AP(E)L (to be made to the University Standards Committee at its meeting of 3 June 2010)
- issues relating to minute-taking at Progression and Awards Boards
- the discussions of the working group on approval procedures<sup>1</sup>
- the provision of online information, for those proposing programmes involving partnerships with external organisations, on issues relating to Memoranda of Understanding.

(Items 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, and 3.12)

**3.2** Noted that a meeting would take place in June 2010 between the Chair and Professor John Carroll, Chair of the Examination Appeals Board, to discuss the issue of responsiveness of Programme Chairs to requests made to them by the Board. (Item 3.2)

**3.3** Noted that the Teaching Enhancement Cycle exercise is available across the university and that the process is managed through the Learning Innovation Unit. (Item 3.3)

**3.4** Noted that meetings between Oscail and all Faculties, to discuss possible collaboration, had taken place. (Item 3.6)

**3.5** Noted that, when the Memoranda of Understanding with the external partner organisations for the restructured MSc in Bioinformatics were finalised, this would be reported to the EC. (Item 3.10)

**3.6** Noted that the survey of student opinion would be made available to students in all Faculties in 2010/11 and that progress in relation to this issue would be reported to the EC. (Item 3.11)

**3.7** Noted, with regard to the HEA Labour Market Activation Initiative, that such work as it had been possible to do up to now had been undertaken (calls to date having been more suited to institutions offering awards at levels lower than eight). (Item 3.14)

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<sup>1</sup> The first task of this working group has been completed. This is the revision of the forms to be used for submitting Section C items for EC approval. (These forms will be made available on line.) The second task, the revision of the guidelines and regulations on validation and accreditation, is under way and the revised documentation will be in the papers for the 8 September 2010 meeting of the EC.

- 3.8** Noted that the accreditation recommendations in respect of the Bachelor of Nursing Studies had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 14 April 2010. (Item 3.15)
- 3.9** Noted that a meeting of a subgroup of the EC, to discuss the financial model in use for validation proposals, would take place on 12 May 2010.<sup>2</sup> (Item 3.18)
- 3.10** Noted that a recommendation about due diligence in respect of a proposed programme had been made by the Chair and had been implemented. (Item 3.19)
- 3.11** Noted that proposals on flexible provision of modules/programmes would be circulated for discussion first to the EC and then to Faculties. (Item 4.1)
- 3.12** Noted that the recommendations on the integration of teaching and research were being discussed in Faculties with a view to prioritisation and that outcome of the discussions would be discussed by the EC at its meeting of 8 September 2010. (Two relevant documents have been made available by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.) (Item 4.6.3)
- 3.13** A request to rename the MEngSc in Biopharmaceutical Engineering as the MSc in Bioprocess Engineering was approved. It was noted that a number of other issues relating to this programme were under discussion in the Faculty of Science and Health and that the outcome of the discussion would be made available (electronically) to the EC as soon as possible. It was agreed to request the Dean of the Faculty to confirm the availability of resources to run the programme on a DCU-only basis as is now proposed. (Item 5) (*The confirmation was received on 6 May 2010.*)

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

### **4. Report on progress of EC goals 2009/10**

#### **4.1 Recommendations on desired characteristics of DCU graduates**

- 4.1.1** Congratulations were extended to Dr Bohan for the very considerable work she has carried out to date to develop the recommendations. The following were noted in the discussion on the issue:
- the next iteration of the documentation may include a matrix to outline desired attributes, in-class opportunities to acquire them and out-of-class opportunities to acquire them

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<sup>2</sup> A summary of the issues discussed at this meeting is contained in the appendix to these minutes.

- the present rather than the future tense will be used in referring to the attributes
- DCU programme outcomes do not, on the whole, tend to emphasise entrepreneurship and innovation despite the view often expressed that these are desirable attributes
- additionally, outcomes relating to ethics are not as common as might be supposed
- skills-based outcomes are also relatively infrequent
- the importance of valuing good governance, while retaining entrepreneurial flair, should be stressed
- DCU graduates are already widely deemed to be hardworking, and this attribute should be included
- it is important to develop leadership capacity, but it should be noted that not everyone is suited to being a leader and there are other, complementary qualities that can equally usefully be developed
- as well as identifying attributes, it will be important to articulate what overall quality or qualities make(s) a DCU graduate distinguishable in a positive sense from graduates of other institutions, and scrutiny of generic attributes (e.g. from the National Framework of Qualifications and equivalent UK documentation) would be helpful here
- the articulation of attributes will need to be more detailed for the internal DCU audience than for external audiences
- it would be helpful to ascertain the views of the linked colleges
- the current work relates to graduates of Level 8 programmes; it will be important to develop it to encompass graduates of Level 9 programmes and articulate how their attributes might be different
- the articulation of graduate attributes is an ongoing rather than a once-off activity.

**4.1.2** The Chair requested the members of the EC to submit further comments to Dr Bohan, emphasising the attributes they would consider essential and any gaps they can identify. A working group will be established to ascertain views across the wider university, by means of a methodology based on the one used by the working group on the Academic Calendar (established by Academic Council in 2009); the Chair will request the Deans of Faculty to nominate members. The recommendations of the working group will be developed over the Summer months and will be submitted to the 8 September 2010 meeting of the EC. A discussion will also take place at Executive about the desirable distinguishing characteristics of the university as an institution.

## **4.2 Recommendations on optimum student profile for DCU**

The Chair noted that she would make available to the EC data from Faculties on projected student numbers over the next three years to inform the recommendation

to be made on optimum student profile, and that the issue would also be discussed by Executive at one of its June 2010 meetings. The recent decrease in numbers of postgraduate research students (except in DCU Business School) was noted with concern. It was agreed to ascertain the views of Mr Frank Soughley, Director of Finance, on the economic benefits of recruiting non-EU students and to include an item on prioritising countries in terms of international recruitment on the agenda of the EC meeting of 8 September 2010.

#### **4.3 Review of achievements to date in terms of the goals**

The paper outlining achievements to date was noted. The Chair noted that the goals for the EC for 2010/11 would need to be prioritised at the EC meetings in September/October 2010. The completion of some of the current goals will form part of the prioritisation. The goals will also include consideration of INTRA (a presentation on INTRA will also be made to the meeting of Academic Council of 9 June 2010).

### **5. Student persistence/progression on programmes**

- 5.1** Dr Bohan noted that the documentation she is preparing for staff and students to provide advice on transfer between programmes and related matters would be available at the beginning of 2010/11 and would be referred to at the orientation sessions in September 2010.
- 5.2** The Chair noted that ongoing work to support students considered 'at risk' and deal with issues relating to modules considered 'problematic' was taking place and would, in due course, include consideration of the outcomes of the June and September 2010 Progression and Awards Boards. A report on this will be made to the 6 October 2010 meeting of the EC.
- 5.3** The Deans of Faculty reported on the work undertaken to date. Among the measures taken are the following:
- in DCU Business School, work has been done to identify instances in which different class groups perform differently when taking the same module
  - in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, the local MIS system (see Item 6 below) is being used to identify problems in Year 1 so that solutions can be targeted appropriately, and ICT support in laboratories is being made available for students undertaking programming
  - in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, details of failure patterns in all Schools have been made available, and these will be followed up
  - in the Faculty of Science and Health, some relatively unexpected patterns have been identified and will be followed up.

The importance of students' aptitude for, and engagement with, their programmes, notwithstanding measures undertaken to support them, was noted.

## **6. Presentation on Management Information System: School of Electronic Engineering**

- 6.1** Mr David Molloy, School of Electronic Engineering, made a presentation on this system and he and Dr Noel Murphy, Head of the School, engaged with the queries that arose. It was noted that the system had considerable strengths in terms of flexibility, ease of use and visual appeal.
- 6.2** Ms Barbara McConalogue outlined parallel developments of relevance to the presentation, such as the availability of commercial tools to perform a range of functions, and noted that, for a system such as that in use in Electronic Engineering to be scaleable across the university, it would be essential to have an adequate number of staff with the appropriate programming skills to support the maintenance and ongoing development of the system to meet the changing needs of the university.
- 6.3** It was noted that the discussions in the university complement discussions which are ongoing at national level to identify and implement appropriate higher education management information systems.
- 6.4** The Chair thanked Mr Molloy and Dr Murphy for their presentation and for sharing their expertise with the EC and noted that discussions would continue between them and ISS and Ms Aisling McKenna about the feasibility of making the strengths of the EE system available across the university.<sup>3</sup>

## **7. Institutional Review of DCU**

Professor O'Kennedy noted that the draft report from the review team had been made available and that the response to this, in the form of identification of factual errors, if any, and a brief institutional statement, would be submitted to the team on 7 May 2010. He therefore requested that any factual errors identified by the EC be communicated to Dr Heinz Lechleiter not later than 6 May.

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<sup>3</sup> Work on this will continue over the Summer months, with progress being reported to the 8 September 2010 meeting of the EC.

**SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES****8. Validation proposal: MA in Ecology and Religion**

Agreed to recommend this proposal for further development towards accreditation and that it would not be necessary to refer it to the Validation Subgroup for detailed consideration.

**9. Validation proposal: MA in Sexuality Studies**

Agreed to refer this proposal for detailed consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 11 May 2010. The following were noted as being among the issues to be discussed by the Subgroup:

- the evidence of likely demand may not be strong enough, and the sequence of the argument would benefit from being more streamlined
- what is described as a marketing strategy may be closer to being a description of views gleaned from correspondents
- further clarification will be needed about the availability of resources to support the launch of the programme
- the aim of starting the programme in Autumn 2010 appears ambitious, and perhaps overly so
- the relevance of the module content to the title of the programme will need further discussion.

The members of the EC were requested to submit any further comments they might have to Ms McDermott by 7 May 2010.

**10. Programme restructuring: Graduate Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapeutic Practice and Master's and Doctorate in Psychotherapy, School of Nursing**

Approved.

**11. Programme restructuring: all access programmes to postgraduate programmes (to create one access route), School of Nursing**

Approved.

**12. Programme restructuring: BSc in Science Education**

Approved.

**13. Stand-alone modules****13.1 School of Biotechnology - BE372: Research in Biochemical Engineering**

Approved.

**13.2 School of Nursing - Nursing Care of Children with Airway/Respiratory Dysfunction**

Approved.

**14. Addition of new pathway to the suite of taught Master's programmes in Oscail**

Approved.

**15. Stand-alone modules in Archaeology, St Patrick's College**

Approved subject to confirmation that the due diligence process with respect to the proposed partner institution has been completed satisfactorily.

**16. Special-purpose award proposal: Ryan Academy**

Approved in principle. The details of the proposal, if approved by the Teaching and Learning Committee in Dublin City University Business School, will be submitted to the EC with a request for approval (on an electronic basis).

**17. Issue relating to the BA in International Business and Languages**

Approved.

**18. Any other business**

- 18.1** A request from the School of Physical Sciences for approval for an application for Erasmus Mundus funding in respect of a proposed programme was approved. Approval was granted on the understanding that, if the funding is forthcoming, the proposed programme will be submitted for validation and accreditation in the usual way.



- 18.2** A letter to the Irish Universities Association from the Minister for Education and Skills, requesting that consideration be given to the awarding of bonus points for Leaving Certificate Higher Level Mathematics, was noted. It was noted that this issue had been discussed by Executive and would be discussed again both by Executive and (at its meeting of 9 June 2010) by Academic Council. The Chair and Mr Dowling referred to a number of recent reports from various expert bodies on the issue. The Chair indicated that these would shortly be made available on line to the EC and requested that members read them and submit comments to her within a week. Mr Dowling suggested that it might be helpful to reconvene a group consisting of staff members from DCU and St Patrick's College that had recently made recommendations on the promotion of Mathematics at higher level in the Leaving Certificate. It was noted that the issue of bonus points had implications for wider considerations such as the relative priority accorded by the university sector to the range of disciplines encountered by students at second level.

**Date of next meeting:**

**Wednesday 8 September 2010, 2.00 p.m. in A204**

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

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

**APPENDIX****MEETING OF SUBGROUP OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Wednesday 12 May 2010  
2.00-3.00 p.m. in AG01

A meeting of a subgroup of the Education Committee took place as indicated above to give consideration to the financial model in use with validation proposals. Those present were:  
Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Mr Jim Dowling, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Professor Bernard Pierce, Professor Malcolm Smyth, Mr Eamonn Cuggy.

Mr Cuggy attended to give a presentation on the model and advise on the issues that arose. Professor Eithne Guilfoyle tendered apologies.

Mr Cuggy's presentation included discussion of three recent validation proposals and the implications of the financial arrangements made in respect of them (including fee income) for both the sponsoring Faculty/Faculties and the other Faculties. In the ensuing discussion, various issues were raised including the following:

- notwithstanding the present very difficult economic climate, it may be desirable to continue to develop new programmes so as to continue to remain competitive vis-à-vis other institutions
- however, at a certain point the additional activities will give rise to additional costs, e.g. the need for a new administrative staff member
- the HEA Employment Control Framework will impact on recruitment to fill resource deficits
- consideration could be given to modelling the financial impact of recruiting international students.

It was noted that, with regard to recent validation proposals, the model is being run with current rather than the previous (higher) RGAM figures.

The following were agreed:

- it would be helpful to apply the model to non-EU students (including varying fee levels since variation now exists) to see how it affects the outcomes
- as early as practicable in the academic year when a new programme is running, it would be helpful to run the model without it to see what effect it has had both on the sponsoring Faculty/Faculties and on the other Faculties.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> However, the feasibility of actually doing this would need to be ascertained with the Finance Office and the Institutional Research and Analysis Officer.

The following were noted as being wider issues which might be considered by Budget Committee:

- it is important to apply the concept of incentivisation to existing as well as new programmes; in this context consideration might be given, for example, to capping numbers on low-weighted programmes
- consideration might be given, if practicable, to ring-fencing new programmes for a fixed period so as to maximise the gain for the sponsoring Faculty/Faculties.

It was noted that it would be important to keep Budget Committee informed of the ways the model is being used.