

## **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

Wednesday 7 March 2012

2.00-4.35 p.m. in A204

**Present:** Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Professor John Costello, Mr Jim Dowling, Dr John Doyle, Professor Alan Harvey, Dr Sarah Ingle, Mr Billy Kelly, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Mr Martin Molony, Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, Dr Anne Sinnott

**Apologies:** Dr Claire Bohan, Mr Cillian Byrne, Dr Lisa Looney

**In attendance:** Ms Aisling McKenna

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

##### **1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted subject to the deferral of Item 13 to the 4 April 2012 meeting of the Education Committee and the inclusion of one submission under Item 14.

##### **2. Minutes of the meeting of 1 February 2012**

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

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

- 3.1** It was noted that the title of the stand-alone module *Assessing in the Online Environment* had been changed to *Assessment and Feedback in the Online Environment*. (Item 9 from the meeting of 1 December 2010)

- 3.2** It was noted that a meeting involving Dr Sinnott, Mr Kelly, Ms McDermott and members of Oscail staff had taken place to discuss issues relating to the proposed undergraduate programme in Procurement and Supply Management and that a further meeting was planned with a view to resolving these issues. (Item 3.1)
- 3.3** It was noted that work is in progress to ascertain both the proportion of deferred students who subsequently take up their places and the views of students who withdrew from the University some years ago. (Item 3.2)
- 3.4** It was noted that information and guidelines for Programme Chairs would shortly be updated and made available. (Item 3.3)
- 3.5** It was noted that the training proposals in respect of Business Intelligence had been approved by the Senior Management Group and that a presentation on them had been made to the Heads' and Deans' meeting of 19 January 2012. Heads had been requested to highlight the training needs of staff in their Schools in respect of BI. Noted that BI is at an early stage of implementation and that new areas for development will be identified on an ongoing basis. (Item 3.4)
- 3.6** It was noted that the work in respect of DCU Online, including the ascertaining of the resources that would be available to support it, was ongoing. (Item 3.5)
- 3.7** It was noted that a report on the possibilities for wider use of the METIS system would be made to the EC at the earliest opportunity. (Item 3.6)
- 3.8** A template for mapping Graduate Attributes on to learning outcomes for proposed undergraduate programmes has been included in the regulations and guidelines for validation proposals and will be included in the regulations and guidelines for accreditation proposals. Employer feedback on the Attributes will be analysed in detail in due course. The link to the draft web pages has been made available to the EC. Appropriate references to the Attributes will be made at Spring Programme Boards and in the course of annual reviews of programmes. (Items 3.7, 6.1.1 and 6.1.2)
- 3.9** It was noted that the optimum student profile is under consideration by Senior Management. (Item 3.9)
- 3.10** With regard to the proposed National Student Survey, it was noted that the working group, established with the assistance of funding from NAIRTL, had made recommendations to the IUA Registrars in January 2012 and that the Registrars had requested that a pilot survey – based largely on the US model because this model considers student engagement as well as student satisfaction, and involving groups

- of students from all universities – should be undertaken in 2011/12. It is likely that the definitive survey will be an adapted version of an existing survey. (Item 3.10)
- 3.11** It was noted that the working group on good practice in respect of feedback to students would make recommendations to the University Standards Committee before the end of 2011/12 and that these would be noted to the EC. (Item 3.11)
- 3.12** It was noted that the management of independent modules would need to be monitored on an ongoing basis. (Item 3.12)
- 3.13** It was noted that a joint working group had been established by the IUA Registrars and the Teaching Council with a view to resolving the various issues that had arisen on the basis of recent stipulations by the Council. Dr James O’Higgins-Norman of the School of Education Studies is a member of this group. The University had provided feedback on the issues to the Council by the due date of 29 February 2012; the Chair, on behalf of the EC, expressed appreciation to Ms Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and colleagues across the University for their very considerable work on this issue. (Item 3.13)
- 3.14** It was noted that a recommendation about the approach to the next cycle of quality reviews would be made to Executive by the Quality Promotion Committee. (Item 3.15)
- 3.15** It was noted that the work of the Working Group on Non-Major Awards to implement the recommendations of the EC was ongoing. (Item 3.16)
- 3.16** It was noted that Ms McKenna had liaised with Ms Muireann Ní Dhuigneáin, outgoing Head of Careers in DCU, about a range of issues arising from the presentation on HEA First Destinations information made by Ms Ní Dhuigneáin to the EC. (Item 4)
- 3.17** It was noted that the proposals on QuEST had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 8 February 2012 and that Mr Kelly would make a presentation on the issue to the Heads’ and Deans’ meeting of 22 March 2012 with a view to having the pilot scheme activated for Semester 2 2011/12. The Chair stressed the importance of maintaining the momentum in respect of this issue and requested the Deans to highlight it to Heads in the event that a Faculty Management Board meeting preceded the Heads’ and Deans’ meeting of 22 March. Noted that a question had been included on the external examiner annual report form requesting the examiner to give an opinion as to the extent to which learning outcomes are being achieved. (Item 5)

- 3.18** It was noted that the working group on e-portfolios was engaged in scoping out its work and developing an appropriate specification and that the EC would be kept abreast of developments. (Item 6.2)
- 3.19** It was noted that appropriate references to resources in respect of university readiness would be made at Spring Programme Boards and in the course of annual reviews of programmes. (Item 7.1)
- 3.20** It was noted that arrangements for Faculty Managers to shadow Ms McDermott at Accreditation Board meetings had been made and would continue to be made as appropriate. (Item 9.1)
- 3.21** It was noted that a paper on the role of the Research Ethics Committee vis-à-vis research at undergraduate level would be submitted by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education to the EC for consideration at its meeting of 4 April 2012. (Item 9.2)

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

### **4. Feedback to date on the template in respect of periodic programme review**

- 4.1** It was noted that the feedback indicated broad consensus on a number of issues: that annual programme reviews should feed into periodic programme reviews; that there should be external input into periodic programme reviews; that the outcomes of periodic programme reviews should be published; that there should be a shared understanding as to the ownership of the process and the outcomes; that current accreditation processes should be utilised to the extent that is appropriate. There is also broad agreement on the headings under which self-assessment should take place and on the fact that the system could be in place in 2012/13.
- 4.2** In the ensuing discussion, the following were noted:
- although it is very helpful that Business Intelligence is now largely capable of automating the process, it would be desirable for full automation to be implemented as soon as possible so as to minimise the work implications for Programme Chairs and encourage them to engage fully with the process
  - work is continuing to ensure that, to the extent possible and appropriate, all statistical information made available for the process relates to the same academic year
  - the process should be kept as simple as possible; external input should be made available electronically to the extent possible, with site visits being organised only where deemed absolutely necessary; the new external examiner online

reporting system will doubtless prove very useful in the future, but as it is currently only in development it should not be prioritised at present, in terms of information-gathering, so as not to delay the overall process

- it will be very important for Schools and Faculties to take ownership of the reporting process; the Quality Promotion Office may provide assistance and advice at the outset, but it is expected that the need for this will diminish over time
- outcomes should be made available to Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees and Faculty Management Boards; a decision will need to be taken as to whether they should also go to central committees for noting
- the overall process should be reported on in the annual report from the Quality Promotion Office, in order to confirm that the periodic programme review process is rolling out/continuing.
- *European Standards and Guidelines* stipulate that the process must be outlined on the University website; a decision will need to be taken on the best location for this
- an overall co-ordinator for the process needs to be identified at Faculty level.
- the self-assessment report should form part of the periodic programme review template; Dr Ingle will work to develop this part of the template with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and with input from the Quality Promotion Committee where relevant
- it may be desirable to pilot the process in one Faculty before implementing it University wide.

**4.3** The Chair thanked Dr Ingle for her very significant work on the issue of periodic programme review and noted that she and Dr Ingle would work together on recommendations about the issue of oversight, for submission for the consideration of the EC at its meeting of 4 April 2012.

## **5. Analysis of student withdrawals**

**5.1** Ms McKenna noted the following in respect of the data:

- a major factor in student withdrawals continues to be the difference between expectation and reality in respect of the programmes students undertake
- broadly, the reasons for withdrawal show little change from previous years
- while financial pressures cause stress for students, they are not a major factor in decisions to withdraw (the 2011/12 student experience survey will explore financial issues in more detail than hitherto)
- there is a decline in the proportion of non-Irish students who withdraw

- the peak months for withdrawal are October and January; this is related to fees issues
- only 40% of withdrawals relate to the first year of a programme
- efforts are being made to ascertain the reasons for withdrawal of those who do not withdraw formally, but it is likely that they are the same as for students who withdraw formally
- it is likely also that the same reasons pertain to students who consider withdrawing but do not actually do so.

**5.2** It was agreed that Ms McKenna would conduct further research with respect to students in their second period of study, differentiating between those who chose to withdraw and those who were obliged to do so on the basis of Marks and Standards, and would make the outcomes available to the EC.

## **6. Analysis of ‘at-risk’ students**

**6.1** Ms McKenna noted the following in respect of the data:

- ‘at-risk’ students currently represent a declining proportion of students overall, though there is an increase in terms of Access students who are deemed to be at risk
- mature students are relatively less likely to be at risk
- overall patterns are broadly the same as in previous years, with a correlation being evident between relatively low entry points and the likelihood of being at risk
- students whose performance in a repeated first year is relatively good tend to do reasonably well in the later stages of the programme, whereas students who demonstrate continued weak performance in the earlier years of the programme but who persist into the later years tend to continue to struggle significantly.

**6.2** It was noted that students who repeat a year and lose contact with their original class cohort tend to find it difficult to continue to motivate themselves, and suggested that such students might be obliged to attend academic exercises in the repeat year.

**6.3** It was noted that it might be desirable to examine the University’s minimum entry requirements for fitness for purpose.

**6.4** It was agreed that further work should be done in terms of identifying discipline areas, and groups of students, in respect of which ‘at-risk’ factors are particularly noticeable over time, and that University resources should be targeted in particular at these areas and groups. In certain cases, it may be

appropriate to support students in making decisions to transfer to more suitable programmes or otherwise take up alternative options. The Chair, Mr Kelly and Ms McKenna will discuss these issues (including the issues at Item 6.2 above), following further analysis, in order to make a recommendation to the EC on this matter.

- 6.5** It was agreed that Ms McKenna would make Faculty-specific information on ‘at-risk’ students 2011/12 available to the Deans.

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

### **7. Validation proposals**

#### **7.1 BSc in Problem-Solving and Software Development**

**7.1.1** The proposed programme was recognised as being an innovative and exciting one, and the proposed entry mechanism appears to have considerable potential. In particular, the concept of a portfolio would appear to be particularly suitable to the discipline. The idea of involving a student on the development team was commended.

- 7.1.2** It was agreed to refer the proposal for detailed consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 13 March 2012. The following were noted as being among the issues to be discussed by the Subgroup and the programme proposers:
- consideration should be given to the title of the programme, particularly with reference to the issue of whether making ‘problem-solving’ explicit in one award title might have consequences for other (existing) programmes in which it is an implicit but key competency
  - ideally, more than one pathway should be illustrated in the documentation so as to give a fuller sense of the opportunities that would be available to students
  - the programme involves significant resource issues; these will need to be addressed
  - account will need to be taken of the possibility that resources may need to be allocated to assisting applicants to prepare portfolios in advance of application
  - significant administrative issues are likely to arise, and these will need to be addressed
  - advising and mentoring students throughout the programme, particularly in the early stages, is likely to be very resource intensive
  - the likely sustainability of the programme over the longer term, given the resources required, will need to be ascertained

- the practicum, as conceived within the context of the programme, would be a new departure; significant consideration will need to be given to how it can successfully be operationalised
- it will need to be ascertained that University (especially Registry) resources allow for the handling of the portfolio in the context of the admissions process; it will be important to advert to the University's policy on Recognition of Prior Learning (approved by Academic Council on 9 February 2011); it is possible, indeed, that the operationalisation of this policy and the operationalisation of the entry mechanisms for the new programme might inform each other
- it will need to be ascertained with Registry, if this has not already been done, that the types of offers to be made to applicants can actually be operationalised
- the portfolio appears to cover computing only, not problem-solving; the question arises as to what other instruments will be used to measure applicants' problem-solving abilities
- in the context of DCU Online, consideration should be given to how the programme might be delivered on an online/blended basis.

## **7.2 Major/Minor Master's programme**

**7.2.1** The proposed programme was recognised as an innovative one that would appear to have considerable potential.

**7.2.2** It was agreed to refer the proposal for detailed consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 13 March 2012. The following were noted as being among the issues to be discussed by the Subgroup and the programme proposers:

- for approval to be possible, it will be necessary to include a minimum of one defined pathway, with a full set of modules, within the programme
- it will be most important to hold detailed discussion with University stakeholders, and in particular with the Registry, with respect to the feasibility, in operational terms, of what is proposed; this is particularly important in view of the short timeframe proposed for launching the programme; the extent to which this discussion can take place, and agreement on the relevant issues can be reached, by the date of the Validation Subgroup meeting will determine whether or not it will be appropriate for the Subgroup to consider the proposal; the issues include, but are not confined to, the operability of broadsheets and the need for advance, fixed, class and examination timetables
- a question arises as to the availability of all members of the proposed programme team
- the list of nominees to the Accreditation Board includes a DCU staff member, and this is in contravention of regulations; it is recognised that this may be a typographical error because there is no CV for this nominee



- further detail about the approval of ‘discipline blocks’ by Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees would be desirable
- the potential exists for the Programme Chair to have a particularly extensive workload; details on how the significant amount of co-ordination work would be approached would need to be made available.
- in the context of DCU Online, consideration should be given to how the programme might be delivered on an online/blended basis.

### **7.3 MSc in Sustainable Energy Finance**

It was agreed that this proposed programme was well conceived and well structured, that it would not be necessary to refer it for detailed consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 13 March 2012, and that it should proceed to accreditation. It was agreed that the accreditation proposal should make it clear that the target student audience comprises both recent graduates and experienced professionals and that the reference to ‘replacement rates’ (on page 11 of the validation proposal) would benefit from clarification.

### **7.4 MSc in Strength and Conditioning for Athletic Performance**

**7.4.1** The proposed programme is recognised as being potentially a very interesting one, although one that can be offered only within the context of available resources, and in particular human resources.

**7.4.2** It was agreed to refer the proposal for detailed consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 13 March 2012. The following were noted as being among the issues to be discussed by the Subgroup and the programme proposers:

- the provision for academic staff to lecture on the programme seems low, given the large number of new modules
- the number of modules with relatively low credit volumes (five) seems high for a Level 9 programme
- some issues arise with regard to the language in the documentation (the Faculty approval date needs to be indicated; the reference to ‘gold standard’ in Section 2 needs to be addressed in terms of feasibility within the timeframe envisaged; at ‘Progression and exit routes’, it would have been preferable to reword the following part of the following sentence: ‘The programme consists of 9 core modules totally 60 credits to the level of postgraduate diploma’ so as to avoid possible confusion around the word ‘level’)
- in Section 5, it is stated that: ‘As part of the programme, students will also obtain professional qualifications from external, international awarding bodies to further enhance their professional development and employability.’;

evidence would be required to verify this statement, along with details of what professional qualifications and what awarding bodies are envisaged

- the list of proposed members of the Accreditation Board includes too few nominees, and there is no nominee of professorial rank
- in the context of DCU Online, consideration should be given to how the programme might be delivered on an online/blended basis
- consideration should be given to the possibility of sharing modules with the other Master's programme proposed in the School of Health and Human Performance, i.e. the MSc in Sports Medicine (Injury and Rehabilitation), as well as more generally across the University (e.g. with reference to Research Methods modules).

## **7.5 MSc in Sports Medicine (Injury and Rehabilitation)**

**7.5.1** The proposed programme is recognised as being potentially a very interesting one, although one that can be offered only within the context of available resources, and in particular human resources.

**7.5.2** It was agreed to refer the proposal for detailed consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 13 March 2012. The following were noted as being among the issues to be discussed by the Subgroup and the programme proposers:

- given that the proposed programme is aimed at professionals such as general practitioners and physiotherapists, it is puzzling that the intention is to offer it on a full-time rather than a part-time basis
- in the entry requirements in Section 4, there is a reference to 'a National University of Ireland', which requires amendment; also, the concept of another university being acceptable to the Director of the Programme does not apply because there are standard mechanisms for evaluating institutions and their qualifications in the context of the University's entry requirements
- the date of Faculty approval needs to be indicated
- the number of modules with relatively low credit volumes (five) seems high for a Level 9 programme
- the list of proposed members of the Accreditation Board includes only one international nominee; it would be preferable to have a second such nominee
- in the context of DCU Online, consideration should be given to how the programme might be delivered on an online/blended basis
- consideration should be given to the possibility of sharing modules with the other Master's programme proposed in the School of Health and Human Performance, i.e. the MSc in Strength and Conditioning for Athletic Performance, as well as more generally across the University (e.g. with reference to Research Methods modules).

**7.6 Joint European Master's programme in Advanced Telecommunications**

**7.6.1** The EC welcomed this proposal, noting however that what was required at this stage was not validation approval but endorsement with a view to strengthening the case to be made for Erasmus Mundus funding. In the event that this funding is forthcoming, the proposal will be resubmitted to the EC for validation, with a view to accreditation. A timeframe for these processes will be identified in due course.

**7.6.2** It was noted that, in a general sense, the University needs to examine a range of issues relating to joint and double awards, and that Dr Looney and her counterparts in the other universities are discussing these issues.

**8. Stand-alone module: 'The Principles and Practice of Peer Support and Peer Advocacy in Mental Health' (School of Nursing and Human Sciences)**

Approved.

**9. Proposal in respect of the BA in Applied Language and Intercultural Studies**

Approved.

**10. Proposals for changes to programmes in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: School of Communications**

Approved subject to endorsement of the proposals by an external expert.

**11. Proposal for Joint Honours Degree in Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences**

Approved.

**12. Proposed restructuring of the MSEN programme, Special Education Department, St Patrick's College**

Approved.

**13. Proposal on exit awards: Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma**

Deferred to the 4 April 2012 meeting of the EC.

**14. Any other business**

On behalf of the EC, the Chair congratulated Mr Kelly on his appointment as Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning. Mr Kelly will continue to be a member of the EC, in this new capacity, though he will need to be replaced on the EC in his current capacity as representative of the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education.

**Date of next meeting:**

<p><b>Wednesday 4 April 2012, 2.00 p.m. in A204</b></p>
---

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

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