

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 7 April 2010

2.00-4.20 p.m. in A204

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Mr Jim Dowling,
Professor Eithne Guilfoyle, Mr Billy Kelly,
Professor Eugene Kennedy, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary),
Dr Kay MacKeogh, Mr John Murphy,
Professor Richard O'Kennedy, Professor Bernard Pierce,
Dr Mary Shine Thompson, Professor Malcolm Smyth

Apologies: Dr Claire Bohan, Mr Gordon McConnell

In attendance: Ms Aisling McKenna
(for Item 4.3)

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the transfer of Item 5 from Section B to the list of issues to be discussed under Item 3 and the consequent renumbering of the Items from 6 onwards.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 3 March 2010

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 Noted that recommendations on AP(E)L would be made to the University Standards Committee at its meeting of 3 June 2010. (Item 3.1)

3.2 A discussion took place about the paper on minute-taking at Progression and Awards Boards which had been submitted by Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Director of Registry. Among the points raised were the following:

- were the practice of minute-taking at PABs to be resumed, staffing resources would need to be identified
- many issues of substance arise at Programme Board Examination Review Committee meetings, at which minutes are not taken
- there is already a practice of noting, on broadsheets, the fact that a student's examination results were discussed
- ideally, all substantive comments made at a meeting would be captured electronically, e.g. by means of an electronic comment board.

The Chair noted that it would be important to keep the issues in mind during the May 2010 pre-PBERC briefing meetings for Faculties and the June 2010 PABs with a view to having a decision taken at a later stage. She also undertook to discuss with Professor John Carroll, Chairperson of the Appeals Board, the issue of responsiveness of Programme Chairs to requests made to them by the Board. (Item 3.3)

- 3.3** Noted that the Teaching Enhancement Cycle was being implemented by academic staff members on an individual basis. (Item 3.4)
- 3.4** Noted that the working group on approval procedures was continuing its discussions with a view to streamlining approval procedures across a range of areas and redrafting the regulations and guidelines in respect of validation and accreditation. (Item 3.5)
- 3.5** Noted that preparations for the accreditation of the proposed BSc in Health Studies were in train and that discussions about the proposed Graduate Diploma/MSc in Materials Engineering, and Science Studies as a subject on the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education programmes in St Patrick's College, were ongoing. (Items 3.6, 3.7 and 3.12)
- 3.6** Noted that meetings between Oscail and Faculties, with a view to identifying opportunities for collaboration, were taking place. (Item 3.8)
- 3.7** The Chair requested any member of the EC who wished to do so to contact the President, by the end of May 2010, with suggestions as to what might helpfully be included in the criteria for the Times Higher Education-Thomson Reuters World University Rankings 2010 system, which is currently in development. (Item 3.10)
- 3.8** Noted that an online location had been identified for the posting of articles of interest to the EC and that members would be informed, on an ongoing basis, when articles were posted. (Item 3.11)
- 3.9** The paper from the programme team for the proposed BSc in Health Studies, outlining likely student demand for the programme, was noted. (Item 3.12)
- 3.10** The proposed restructuring of the MSc in Bioinformatics was approved. It was agreed that issues relating to Module BE403 would be brought to the attention of the Programme Chair. It was agreed that, when the Memoranda of Understanding

- with the external partner organisations had been finalised, this would be reported to the Education Committee. (Item 3.13)
- 3.11** With regard to the student survey recently carried out in Oscail and due for deployment on a university-wide basis, it was noted that it had been made available to DCU Business School students and would be made available to the students in the other Faculties from September 2010, with confirmation to be submitted to the EC that this was being done. Ms Aisling McKenna, Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, and staff in Information Systems and Services are working to develop a software package to analyse the results. The recommendations arising from the Institutional Review which took place from 1 to 4 March 2010 include a reference to the importance of obtaining and acting upon student feedback. (Item 3.14)
- 3.12** Noted that Mr Gordon McConnell was continuing his work to make available on line information for those undertaking the preparation of joint programme proposals with other institutions, the aim being to assist those charged with drawing up Memoranda of Understanding. (Item 3.16)
- 3.13** Noted that Dr Claire Bohan would report to the EC meeting of 5 May 2010 on the work undertaken to support students in persisting with their programmes of study or, where appropriate, transferring to alternative programmes. (Item 5)
- 3.14** With regard to the HEA Labour Market Activation Initiative, it was noted that the working group was continuing its discussions notwithstanding the fact that calls for submissions to date have been relatively unsuitable for the university sector. (Item 6)
- 3.15** Noted that the recommendations from the electronic reaccreditation process for the Bachelor of Nursing Studies, currently in progress, would be reported to Academic Council at its meeting of 14 April 2010. (Item 8)
- 3.16** Mr Dowling noted that he had had a productive meeting with representatives of Google Ireland and that, contrary to reports in the media, Google had a very positive attitude to recruiting DCU graduates. The Google representatives had stressed the importance, for graduates, of having a broad set of skills – of the sort often developed through participation in student societies – in addition to their discipline-specific knowledge (see also Item 4.4.2 below). Mr Dowling stated his intention of including Google representatives in the membership of advisory boards for the programmes in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing. (Item 10.2)
- 3.17** Noted that, at its meeting of 9 March 2010, the Validation Subgroup of the EC had recommended that the proposed BSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy not progress to accreditation at this time. The Subgroup also made the following recommendations:

- It would be appropriate to await the outcome of the discussions between the proposed partner organisation, IICP (Institute of Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy) and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland about the level(s) to which the IICP's current programmes will be attached before the possibility of introducing a DCU-award Level 8 programme is considered.
- It would be important for the resources in IICP dedicated to delivering a Level 8 programme to be attached to an appropriate research base.
- The nature of the relationship required between DCU and IICP, in order to ensure a programme of appropriate quality and input, would seem to require significant depth and ongoing interaction. This would appear to be such that greater resources would be required to manage it than appear to be available, or suggested, at present.

3.18 Noted that, at its meeting of 9 March 2010, the Validation Subgroup of the EC had agreed that a meeting of a subgroup of the Education Committee would be organised to discuss the financial model used in the preparation of validation proposals and, if necessary and appropriate, make recommendations as to how it might most effectively be used with future proposals. This meeting has now been arranged for 12 May 2010. It will be chaired by the Deputy President/Registrar. The Deans of Faculty and Ms McDermott will be present, and a presentation will be made by Mr Eamonn Cuggy.

3.19 Noted that, at the meeting of the Validation Subgroup of 9 March 2010, a query had arisen about the relevance of the due diligence process to a forthcoming validation proposal, and that the Chair intended to make a recommendation on this matter.

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Report on progress of EC goals 2009/10

The Chair noted that, at the meeting of 5 May 2010, which would be the last meeting of the academic year, a review of achievements to date in terms of the goals would be undertaken.

4.1 Flexibility of module/programme provision

Professor O'Kennedy noted the issues likely to impact on flexibility of provision, stressing the importance of having a management information system available, of addressing timetabling problems and of taking cognisance both of staff workloads and of the financial impact of flexible provision on Schools and Faculties. He noted too the potential links between flexibility of provision and graduate attributes (see Item 4.4.3 below). It was agreed that he would circulate to the EC some proposals on how flexibility of provision might be conceptualised and implemented.

Following comment from the EC members, the proposals will be sent to the Faculties for discussion.

4.2 Emerging subject areas

4.2.1 Professor O’Kennedy summarised some of the outcomes of the recent Institutional Review in so far as they might impact on the development of new subject areas: the need for a management information system; the importance of teaching quality and of assessing this; the significant potential of the Academic Framework for Innovation. He noted two developments in regard to SIF funding which might also impact on the development of new areas: funding had been reduced overall though the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education remain in post; the learning innovation and graduate education strands continue to be funded though there is no further funding for the internationalisation strand.

4.2.2 The Chair noted teaching quality as one of the EC goals for 2010/11 and stressed the importance of the management information system in facilitating the development of the AFI. As the draft report from the Institutional Review will be available shortly, the review will constitute an agenda item for the EC meeting of 5 May 2010, and this is intended, *inter alia*, to foster further discussion of the matters highlighted by Professor O’Kennedy.

4.3 Programme health check: final recommendations

4.3.1 Ms Aisling McKenna summarised recent developments: Faculty-specific data had been made available to the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education to inform the pilot programme review process; the Associate Deans had been asked for feedback on the fitness for purpose of the data; advice had been sought from Dr Noel Murphy, Head of the School of Electronic Engineering, and Mr David Molloy, also of the School of Electronic Engineering, on the appropriate metrics for the revised ‘traffic light’ system which it is proposed to use to highlight programme strengths and weaknesses in a user-friendly, graphical format. Ms McKenna summarised some issues arising from the discussion with Dr Murphy and Mr Molloy: the importance of agreeing the definitions that would drive the system; the need to ensure that the system is easily accessible by all who need to use it; the need for more detailed examination statistics; the importance of ensuring that the indices fall naturally within the information required for programme review so as to eliminate duplication of work; the fact that different types of information must be made available at various points of the year to suit various purposes.

4.3.2 The Chair undertook to review the management information system in use in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing to ascertain its fitness for purpose in terms of possible wider use in the university. It was agreed also that Dr Murphy and Mr Molloy would make a presentation on the system to the 5 May 2010 meeting of the EC and that Ms McKenna would discuss with Ms Barbara McConalogue, Director of Information Systems and Services, the means of linking the ITS system

to the summary information system referred to at Item 4.3.1 above. The current manual system will continue to be used pending further developments.

4.3.3 The Chair thanked Ms McKenna and the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education for their work to date on this issue.

4.4 Recommendations on desired characteristics of DCU graduates

4.4.1 The paper on this issue, prepared by Dr Claire Bohan, was commended for its quality and the range of issues it covered. The following points were made in the ensuing discussion:

- DCU should articulate its concept of graduateness in a clear, simple and concise way
- it will be important to ensure that, to the extent possible, desirable attributes, once identified, are rewarded appropriately
- it will be important to avoid curriculum overload in an attempt to develop the desired attributes
- consideration needs to be given to student strengths and weaknesses (e.g. in terms of literacy and numeracy as they apply in a higher education context) on entering DCU
- consideration might be given to challenging students in ways similar to those used by recruiters in high-technology companies
- the emphasis in the paper on engagement by students in their own personal and professional development is important, and the Students' Union has the potential to be very helpful in encouraging such engagement.

4.4.2 The following suggestions were made for the further development of the paper:

- an outline of developments in the university of relevance to the issue of graduate attributes (e.g. the recent exercises undertaken to develop module and programme learning outcomes) would be helpful
- the issue of employability might usefully be foregrounded in the paper to a greater extent than is the case at present (the point was made, however, that it would be important to conceptualise the graduate as a person with a broad range of skills in addition to job-related skills – see also Item 3.16 above)
- there is scope to adapt the University of Sydney model to meet DCU's needs
- a matrix might be devised to indicate desirable attributes and how they might be fostered (perhaps incorporating data yielded by the psychometric testing which is undertaken by the Careers Service).

4.4.3 It was agreed that the paper should be discussed in Faculties and that the revised version, incorporating, as appropriate, the recommendations at Item 4.4.2 above and recommendations from Faculties, would be on the agenda of the EC meeting of 5 May 2010. It was agreed also that it would be helpful for Dr Bohan to discuss the paper with Professor O'Kennedy in the light of the issues he mentioned in respect of flexibility of module/programme provision (see Item 4.1 above).

4.5 Recommendations on the optimum student profile for DCU

The Chair thanked Dr MacKeogh for the very considerable work she had undertaken in relation to this subject and indicated that it would be on the agenda of the EC again, for the meeting of 5 May 2010, and would by that stage be complemented by data from Faculties on areas of growth in terms of student numbers and the implications of these for resources. The outcome of the meeting of 5 May 2010 on this issue will be highlighted to Executive.

4.6 Integration of teaching and research: request for prioritisation of recommendations

4.6.1 It was noted that implementing some or all of the recommendations would effectively operationalise some aspects of DCU strategy. Recommendation number 4, which is about the possible expansion of the suite of Level 9 programmes, was noted as being of relevance to the work on the student profile recently undertaken by Dr MacKeogh (see Item 4.5 above). With regard to recommendation 8, which is about reviewing and documenting best practice, a query arose as to whether or not the reference was intended to cover international best practice; this will be checked with the authors of the report containing the recommendations, Ms Morag Munro and Dr Declan Raftery. The Chair emphasised the desirability of including the international aspect.

4.6.2 A variety of opinions was expressed about recommendation number 5, which introduces the concept of combining the President's Awards for Research and the President's Awards for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. It was suggested, on the one hand, that to do this might unduly de-emphasise the contribution of teaching to the university's endeavours and, on the other hand, that it might help to foster the concept of teaching and research being closely-related activities.

4.6.3 It was agreed to circulate the recommendations for discussion, and suggested prioritisation, in Faculties.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

5. Proposal relating to the joint Master's programme in Biopharmaceutical Engineering with UCD

Approved in principle subject to the following: confirmation that the changed arrangements do not constitute a substantial change to programme content or learning outcomes; to the extent that content and outcomes are changed, confirmation by an external expert that this is appropriate; clarification in relation

to issues of ownership of intellectual property; incorporation of the recommendations of the Accreditation Board in the finalised accreditation documentation.

6. Proposed amendments to structures: postgraduate programme in Computer-aided Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering

Approved.

7. Request for approval of participation in an Erasmus Mundus II Joint Master's funding proposal

Approved.

8. CVs of nominees to the Accreditation Board for the proposed BSc in Health Studies

Approved.

9. Any other business

The Chair thanked Dr Kay MacKeogh, who is leaving DCU and whose last EC meeting it was, for her very significant contribution to the work of the EC since its inception, and wished her every success in her future endeavours.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 5 May 2010, 2.00 p.m. in A204

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____