

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 7 October 2009

2.00-4.00 p.m. in A204

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Claire Bohan, Dr Pat Brereton,
Mr Jim Dowling, Ms Jean Hughes, Mr Gordon McConnell,
Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Kay MacKeogh,
Mr John Murphy, Professor Bernard Pierce

Apologies: Professor Eugene Kennedy, Professor Mark Morgan,
Professor Richard O’Kennedy, Dr Mary Shine Thompson,
Professor Malcolm Smyth

In attendance: Dr Françoise Blin (for Item 6)
Dr Sheelagh Wickham

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 9 September 2009

The minutes were confirmed subject to the revision of part of the first sentence of Item 5.2 so that it reads as follows:

‘research indicates that the success of processes like this one depends heavily on the prevailing culture, and this means that support at School level, including encouragement to staff to engage in self-evaluation as a matter of course, is crucial;’.

The minutes were then signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Noted that, in all cases in which potential members of an Accreditation Board are being considered for approval by the EC, it should be ensured that all nominees are appropriately independent of the university. (Item 3.3 from the meeting of the EC of 6 May 2009).
- 3.2** Noted that proposals on Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning had been discussed by the University Standards Committee at its meeting of 1 October 2009. Ms Hughes summarised the outcome of the discussion. It had been agreed that each School would be requested to submit its AP(E)L policy to the Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committee for approval and that this committee would then publish broad AP(E)L criteria. If the university were to move to using the PAC system for direct applications to undergraduate programmes, it would need to be ensured that the system was compatible with AP(E)L policies and procedures. It will be essential for the university to devote time to detailed discussion of AP(E)L at this point to ensure that the best possible policies and procedures are developed. Dr MacKeogh referred to the SIF 1 project on AP(E)L, which is likely to result in documentation to which it might be useful for all institutions to refer. The close relationship between AP(E)L and the HEA Labour Market Activation Initiative (see Item 5 below) was noted. (Item 3.1)
- 3.3** Noted that it was possible that a revised validation proposal for a BSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy would be submitted to a future meeting of the EC. The policy on due diligence has been made available to the programme proposers. (Item 3.2)
- 3.4** Noted that the extent to which specialisms should be indicated on parchments was under discussion in Faculties. (Item 3.6)
- 3.5** Noted that a programme proposal from the School of Electronic Engineering/Faculty of Engineering and Computing would be submitted for validation and accreditation prior to being resubmitted for Erasmus Mundus funding. (Item 3.7)
- 3.6** Noted that a meeting had taken place between the Deputy President/Registrar, the Deans of Faculty and Mr Eamonn Cuggy, Finance Officer, to agree further procedures for operating the financial model to be used with validation proposals and that, as a result of this, further refinements had been introduced to the model to facilitate the provision of more accurate information about the income that would ultimately accrue to a Faculty as a result of the introduction of a new programme. (Item 3.8)

- 3.7** Noted that procedures for approving amendments to programmes that do not require validation or accreditation were under discussion in Faculties. (Item 3.9)
- 3.8** Noted that it was likely that *curricula vitae* for proposed members of two electronic Accreditation Boards relating to All Hallows College would be submitted for approval to the 4 November 2009 meeting of the EC. (Item 3.10)
- 3.9** Noted that developments in relation to the Teaching Enhancement Cycle process would be reported to the EC in due course. (Item 5.2)
- 3.10** Agreed that Dr MacKeogh would prepare a short paper on module registration figures and related issues (especially retention and progression) for discussion at the 4 November meeting of the EC. In preparing this paper, Dr MacKeogh will consult the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education with regard to (a) the kinds of quantitative information that they would find most useful as a means of informing discussion about retention and progression and (b) the factors which facilitate, and inhibit, retention and progression. Other information will also be made available to Dr MacKeogh: Ms Hughes will summarise the deliberations of the Student Retention Task Force chaired by Professor Maria Slowey and will also make available research findings in regard to retention and withdrawal (including the importance of inappropriate choice of programme as a driver for withdrawal); Dr Bohan and Mr Murphy will provide information on the wide and complex range of factors which influence students' decisions to remain on a programme, or not. Other members of the EC are also welcome to submit comments to Dr MacKeogh. Noted that it would be desirable to focus on a number of specific problem areas rather than attempting to cover all programmes in detail. Noted that, internationally, retention and progression issues tend to cluster in particular disciplines. The importance of ensuring that information on retention and progression is made available in an appropriate form and to the appropriate staff members, on a consistent basis, was also noted. (Item 6.3)
- 3.11** Noted that, while the majority of academic staff had made themselves available (particularly in September 2009) on the consultation days which follow the publication of examination results, there had been some problems with non-availability. The role of Heads of School in terms of reminding staff of their responsibilities in this regard was noted; the matter will be included on the agenda of the May 2010 Heads' meeting in preparation for the publication of results in July and September 2010. Noted also that class representatives had a role to play in reminding students of the existence of the consultation days and of the importance of using them to the fullest extent (e.g. by making appointments with staff in advance and being aware that it is possible to view examination scripts). Noted that there were some concerns about the timing of the publication of results post-Progression and Awards Boards and that these could be discussed in

the context of the deliberations of the working group set up by Academic Council to consider issues relating to the academic calendar. (Item 6.4)

- 3.12** Noted that the policy on due diligence would be submitted for approval to Executive (meeting of 13 October 2009) and Academic Council (meeting of 14 October 2009). (Item 7)
- 3.13** Noted that the Programme Board for the Graduate Diploma/MA in Translation Studies was giving consideration to a revised title, as recommended by the EC, for a new pathway on the programme to be offered from 2010/11. (Item 8)
- 3.14** Noted that the issue of staff-student liaison would form part of the discussion on student retention and progression at the 4 November 2009 meeting of the EC. (Item 12.2)

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Education Committee's goals for 2009/10

- 4.1** The Chair circulated a list of proposed priority issues for discussion and action by the EC in 2009/10 along with a proposal from Ms Aisling McKenna, Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, to conduct a periodic 'health check' on programmes on the basis of standardised quantitative data. The relevance of these issues to the issue of module registration figures and retention/progression (see Item 3.12 above) was noted.
- 4.2** In the ensuing discussion, the following were noted:
- retention and progression rates impact on the student experience; they also, however, impact on both the university's reputation and its financial situation (in connection with the latter, it was suggested that Mr Eamonn Cuggy, Finance Officer, might be invited to a future meeting of the EC to explain in detail the financial implications of withdrawal/non-progression)
 - it will be important to agree objectives with regard to the student profile (e.g. the mix of undergraduate/postgraduate students and the mix of Irish/other EU/non-EU students); with regard to international students generally, consideration needs to be given to the impact of their numbers on the student experience generally
 - account will need to be taken of the impact of international rankings (note Item 9 below)

- the university gained an early reputation for innovative programme development, and it will be important to continue building on this as far as possible and appropriate
- the translation of research findings into teaching activities is of considerable importance; it is very helpful that one of the projects within the SIF 2 Enhancement of Learning strand focuses on this area
- the pace at which the Academic Framework for Innovation can be implemented is also of relevance in the context of the EC's overall goals
- a recurrent theme, when issues such as the present one are being discussed, is the possibility of defining the unique qualities of a DCU graduate and how students can most effectively be enabled to acquire these qualities.

4.3 Agreed that, in determining the goals of the EC, articulation with university strategy, and in particular with the Enhancement of Learning component strategy, would be essential. Agreed that Ms Hughes would undertake an exercise to map the priority issues proposed by the Chair on to the relevant parts of the EoL implementation plan. Agreed also that Dr Wickham, as Chair of the Learning Innovation Advisory Panel, would ask the LIAP membership to outline its perspective on the remit of the EC and that the Chair would liaise with Professor Richard O'Kennedy about the articulation between the Internationalisation component strategy and the role of the EC. (Noted that it was also open to the EC to request the LIAP to prioritise for discussion issues considered to be of particular relevance to the EC's goals, once finally determined).

4.4 Agreed that the members of the EC would communicate to the Chair, within a week, their views on what the goals for 2009/10 should be, on the basis of the documentation circulated (see Item 4.1 above) and the discussion that followed. Noted that a number of key themes had already been identified and were being discussed at meetings and that the synergies across these themes were beginning to emerge clearly (the themes include programme review, teaching quality evaluation, student performance and the student experience).

4.5 Noted that the terms of reference of the EC are available on line.¹

¹ At http://www.dcu.ie/internal/ec/pdf/ec_tor.pdf

5. Report on DCU's involvement in the HEA Labour Market Activation Initiative, and discussion of the wider strategic issues

Ms Hughes made a presentation on the Initiative, noting the following:

- the timescale for organising and filling places under the Initiative was very concentrated, and it is hoped that more realistic timescales will operate with regard to future calls for action
- it is hoped that more detailed demographic data, and better articulation with the Department of Social and Family Affairs, will characterise future calls
- some flexibility with regard to the employment control framework would also be helpful, particularly in view of the importance of ensuring that students admitted under the Initiative have a positive experience of higher education
- because of the NFQ levels at which a significant number of the places were to be filled, the Institutes of Technology found themselves in a better position than the universities to respond to the initial call
- it would be very helpful for the university to develop a system of rapid accreditation of non-major awards (as has been developed in the IoTs)
- work is in progress at present to prepare a proposal, under the European Globalisation Fund, to provide places to former members of staff of SR Technics; this work is being carried out in partnership with a number of other higher education institutions including All Hallows College; here too, resourcing issues may prove problematic (though All Hallows may be able to provide some assistance); regardless of the outcome of the proposal, however, it will be very useful as a template for future proposals
- it will be very important for the university to have a clear strategic position with regard to the Initiative.

The Chair expressed appreciation to Ms Hughes, Mr Seamus Fox and their colleagues for their very significant work to date in relation to the Initiative and noted that she intended to discuss the wider strategic context with Professor O'Kennedy.

6. Programme review and related issues: report on developments to date

- 6.1** Dr Blin reported on this issue, noting that the template for programme review, having been approved by the EC, would be piloted in all the Faculties simultaneously and that, in leading on this, the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education would be mindful of the importance of articulating, to the extent possible, with other ongoing work in the Faculties so as not to increase workloads.

- 6.2** The Associate Deans will liaise with Dr MacKeogh, as well as with ISS, the Registry and Ms Aisling McKenna, Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, about the data required to populate the template prior to circulation within Faculties. They will also liaise with Dr Heinz Lechleiter, Director of Quality Promotion. They will then discuss with Ms McDermott the optimum time for resubmitting the programme review issue, and the wider quality issues articulated in *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, for discussion by the EC; this will very likely be January or February 2010.
- 6.3** A diagram was circulated which had been prepared in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing with a view to outlining clearly the lines of communication across committees and senior staff within the Faculty. Noted that Dr Noel Murphy, Head of the School of Electronic Engineering, had suggested some changes to relevant wording in the self-assessment report submitted by the Faculty for its recent quality review; agreed that he would be requested to make details of the revised wording available to the EC. The Chair noted that, as the wording was of relevance to the role of Programme Chairs, it would, when available, be factored into the current discussions at Executive about this matter. Noted that it would be desirable to include a reference to the Associate Dean for Education in the diagram. Agreed that the diagram had the potential to be useful to all Faculties and would be circulated to the EC membership with a request for further comments and suggestions in relation to it. The Chair thanked Mr Dowling and Ms Jennifer Bruton, Associate Dean for Education in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, for preparing the diagram.

7. Revised proposal on teaching quality evaluation

Agreed that the members of the EC would, within ten days, submit comments to Dr MacKeogh on the revised proposal which she had prepared. Any member who wishes to suggest a prioritisation of the issues covered in the proposal is invited to do so. Dr MacKeogh will also consult the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education on the issue.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

8. Proposed stand-alone module (School of Nursing)

Approved.

9. Any other business

Noted that the 2009 Times Higher Education-QS World University Rankings would be published on 8 October 2009, that DCU had moved from 302 up to 279 in these rankings (note Item 4.2 above) and that Mr McConnell intended to circulate to the EC membership an analysis of the information made available through the rankings about the Irish universities generally.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 4 November 2009, 2.00 p.m. in A204

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____