

## **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

Wednesday 12 January 2011

2.00-4.15 p.m. in A204

**Present:** Professor Bernard Pierce (Chair), Dr Claire Bohan,  
Mr Cillian Byrne, Mr Jim Dowling, Professor Eithne Guilfoyle,  
Dr Jean Hughes, Mr Billy Kelly, Mr Martin Molony,  
Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh,  
Professor Richard O’Kennedy

**Apologies:** Dr Sarah Ingle, Professor Anne Scott, Professor Malcolm Smyth

**In attendance:** Ms Aisling McKenna, Dr Sheelagh Wickham

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

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

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of four submissions under Item 10.

##### **2. Minutes of the meeting of 1 December 2010**

The minutes were confirmed subject to the following:

- the replacement of ‘2011’ by ‘2010’ in the title of Item 5
- the replacement of the word ‘operationalised’ by the word ‘developed’ in the second sentence of Item 6.

They were then signed by the Chair.

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

- 3.1** Noted that proposals on the Recognition of Prior Learning would be made to the University Standards Committee at its meeting of 3 February 2011. (Item 3.1)
- 3.2** Noted that surveys of student opinion would be carried out in all Faculties in 2010/11, at a time to be determined in due course, and that Mr Kelly would report to the other Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and to Ms McKenna on the outcomes of the pilot exercise carried out in DCU Business School. (Item 3.2)
- 3.3** Noted that the action plan following the institutional review of DCU in March 2010 was being prepared. (Item 3.3)
- 3.4** Noted that an application for Erasmus Mundus funding would be resubmitted by the School of Physical Sciences. (Item 3.4)
- 3.5** Noted that the revised information for Programme Chairs was being prepared and would be made available on line as soon as possible. (Item 3.5)
- 3.6** Noted that the programme review template was being revised to take account of the experience gleaned through the pilot reviews in 2009/10 and to incorporate consideration of INTRA and possibly the year abroad for DCU students also, and that it would be shared with Dr Ingle. Noted also that discussions were in progress with Information Systems and Services about the provision of a user-friendly web interface. (Item 3.6)
- 3.7** Noted that proposals on the personal tutor system would be submitted for the consideration of the EC at its meeting of 2 February 2011. (Item 3.8)
- 3.8** Noted that the working group which is developing the University Readiness Module intended to finalise the draft module descriptor with a view to submitting it for the consideration of the EC at its meeting of 2 March 2011. Noted that a range of both generic and subject-specific areas would be covered in it, that it would include elements from Palgrave Study Skills and that it would afford students an opportunity to get an overview of their chosen programme. The EC members expressed support for the proposed module. Noted that the importance of ensuring that students were in a state of readiness for university education had been mentioned in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, published on 11 January 2011, and that it would be important to ensure that both the University Readiness Module and Year 1 undergraduate modules more generally afforded students every opportunity to prepare appropriately for higher education notwithstanding the need also to ensure that there is appropriate coverage of discipline-specific material; it is hoped that the preparation will facilitate students in

- mastering such material. Noted that students tended to enter university with considerable experience in instrumental learning and that it would be important to ensure that Year 1 module assessments did not unduly reward such learning but, instead, encouraged the development of critical thinking skills. (Items 3.9 and 4.3.3)
- 3.9** Noted that very considerable work had been undertaken to progress curriculum reform by means of the enhancement of module learning outcomes, that this work would form the subject of a presentation to the Heads' meeting of 20 January 2011 by Ms Morag Munro, Acting Head of the Learning Innovation Unit, and that it would be important to ensure that, henceforth, the work would be mainstreamed and considered to be a normal ongoing activity rather than a once-off project. (Item 3.10)
- 3.10** Noted that work to make available, on a shared basis across institutions, certain modules from member institutions of the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance was in progress. (Item 3.11)
- 3.11** Noted that the visit to the University by representatives of the Irish Universities Quality Board, in the context of the ongoing exercise on programme approval procedures, had taken place on 15 December 2010 and that follow-up work was in progress. Noted that, at its meeting of 12 January 2011, members of the Quality Promotion Committee had commended the high standard of preparation for this visit which had been undertaken by those who had organised it. Noted that the staff and students who had met the IUQB team had demonstrated a high level of engagement with the process. (Item 3.12)
- 3.12** Noted that the recommendations of the electronic Accreditation Board in respect of the re-accreditation of the BSc in Nursing had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 8 December 2010. (Item 3.13)
- 3.13** In the course of discussion on proposals relating to the evaluation and grading of INTRA placements, the following were noted:
- INTRA module descriptors vary very widely, and not all of them have been subject to review in the context of the development of the Academic Framework for Innovation
  - it will be important to ensure that students are given adequate opportunities (weekly, or perhaps somewhat less frequently if considered appropriate) to engage in reflective learning to enhance their skills in this respect (such an approach will also help to ensure that staff workloads are kept to a manageable level)
  - procedures developed for students on INTRA could be extended to students on years abroad and on clinical placements (though it was noted that the latter tend to require very specific and prescribed learning achievements on

the part of students with the result that the requirements of students might have to be somewhat different from the requirements of students on INTRA placements)

- given the great variety that exists in terms of INTRA placements, it might be preferable to use broad descriptors of achievement rather than awarding marks
- given that some of the factors that influence the value of INTRA placements may be beyond the control of either the University or the student, careful thought will need to be given to ensuring that the learning outcomes are defined in an appropriately flexible way that makes it feasible for students to achieve them independently of local factors
- consideration could be given to providing preparatory workshops in Year 2 and possibly Year 1 (though the issue of how the resources for these workshops might be provided would have to be addressed)
- enhanced evaluation and grading procedures for INTRA have the potential to make the experience increasingly meaningful for staff as well as students.

Dr Bohan undertook to provide support in terms of making available, for reflective learning purposes, the Mahara open-source e-portfolio system. It was noted that a presentation on INTRA would be made to the Heads' meeting of 20 January 2011 and agreed that feedback from that meeting, as well as the points noted above, would be factored into revised proposals on the issue to be made to the EC at its meeting of 2 February 2011. The Chair thanked Dr Hughes and the other staff members involved in the drawing up of the proposals (Ms Maeve Long of the INTRA office and Dr Derek Molloy of the School of Electronic Engineering). (Item 3.14)

**3.14** Noted that Information Systems and Services had indicated that the working group on Business Intelligence intended to submit a presentation on proof of concept to the steering group on 20 January 2011 and that, following this, updated details about the project would be made available to the EC. (Item 3.15)

**3.15** Agreed that consideration would be given to using an alternative description in place of 'flexible learning' and that any such alternative description would be conveyed to Ms McDermott. (Item 3.16)

**3.16** Noted that there had been considerable positive engagement with the proposals on teaching quality evaluation at the Heads' meeting of 18 November 2010 and the meeting of Academic Council of 8 December 2010. Noted that it might be preferable to refer to 'teaching quality evaluation and enhancement' so as to reflect the developmental and supportive aspects of the initiative. The importance of ensuring that processes were well designed, operationally efficient, robust and conducive to allowing good teaching to be recognised was noted also. Agreed that, to progress the issue, a working group should be set up, and that it should be conceived of as a subgroup of the Heads' group and chaired by a Head of School

(possibly the Head of the School of Education Studies in view of the disciplinary expertise in the area that resides in the School). Agreed that the group should include a Head of School from each Faculty as well as representation from Human Resources, the Office of the Vice-President for Learning Innovation, the Quality Promotion Unit and the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education. Consideration might also be given to the inclusion of a suitably knowledgeable person external to the University, possibly from one of the institutions forming the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance. (Item 4.1)

- 3.17** Noted that a detailed project plan aimed at embedding the graduate attributes would be submitted for the consideration of the EC at its meeting of 2 February 2011. (Item 4.2)
- 3.18** Agreed that Ms McKenna would make available to the EC, for its meeting of 2 February 2011, updated information on reasons for student withdrawal from the University. (Item 4.3.6)
- 3.19** Noted that the information provided to Deans by Ms McKenna about individual modules associated with a high level of poor performance and/or failure had proved very useful as a basis for remedial action. (Item 4.3.8)
- 3.20** Noted that work to develop a standard method of inputting information on to Coursebuilder was in progress. (Item 4.3.9)
- 3.21** Noted that work to develop the Level 8 framework approved by the EC at its meeting of 1 December 2010 was in progress and was expected to be completed by mid-February 2011. (Item 6)
- 3.22** Noted that work was in progress to prepare for the submission for accreditation of the proposed new subject 'Science Studies' on the BA and BEd programmes in St Patrick's College. (Item 8)
- 3.23** Noted that updated information on the recognition of the Institute of Education International Foundation Programme would be made available to the EC at its meeting of 2 February 2011. (Item 11)

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

### **4. Progress on EC goal: integration of teaching and research**

- 4.1** The discussion about this issue was based on proposals submitted to the EC at its meeting of 3 March 2010, comments by EC members at that meeting and the meeting of 7 April 2010, and information subsequently made available by Faculties

about their ongoing and planned initiatives in this area (though, in the case of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the information predates March 2010).

**4.2** In the course of the discussion, the following were noted:

- in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, progress in the area is led by means of twice-yearly joint meetings of the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee and the Faculty Research Committee
- DCU Business School is conducting an audit of modules to determine the extent to which research activities are integrated with teaching (this includes evaluating the extent to which staff who are less research active none the less integrate the latest research into their teaching)
- in the case of the Faculty of Science and Health, it is noted that the existence of CASTeL greatly facilitates the integration of teaching and research
- a range of initiatives is under way in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, and the integration of teaching and research has been fundamental to, for example, the development of the MEng in Telecommunications Engineering and the funding of RINCE
- the approach to blended learning in Oscail has involved consideration of the integration of teaching and research
- it might be desirable for the University to articulate a position with regard to senior researchers (including, though not confined to, those in CSETs) who express reservations about engaging in teaching
- difficulties can arise when a Principal Investigator and/or a funding body expresses a preference for a research student or postdoctoral researcher not to teach
- the DRHEA Undergraduate Research Conference in October 2010 showcased very successfully the types of integration that can be achieved at undergraduate level
- further attention might usefully be paid to the possibility of making research facilities available to students on taught programmes, the potential for undergraduate student participation in EUREKA programmes, and examples of existing taught programmes which were developed on the basis of research in a CSET (e.g. the MSc in Biomedical Diagnostics)
- there is the potential to link with the work on graduate attributes being undertaken in the University
- consideration could be given to providing written statements, available on line, for postgraduate students to highlight for them the importance of integrating teaching and research and the possibilities inherent in such integration.

**4.3** Recent discussions at Executive about the Researcher Career Framework and the implications of this for the topic under discussion were noted.

- 4.4** With respect to Section 5.4 of the document from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences entitled *Provision of Teaching Experience to Research Students: Guidelines for Best Practice*, it was noted that the support provided by the Learning Innovation Unit/Graduate Research Office takes the form of a module rather than a programme and that students are encouraged to take it not necessarily in their first year of research but as closely as possible to the time when they will actually be engaging in teaching.
- 4.5** With respect to recommendation 2 in the document submitted for the consideration of the EC at its meeting of 3 March 2010, it was noted that the Academic Promotions Committee deals with promotion to Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor but not promotion to Professor. It was agreed that clarification would be sought about the meaning of ‘teaching-led research criteria’ referred to in this recommendation. It was noted that the majority of the recommendations involved action at University level rather than action by particular Faculties, and agreed that the current status of the actions proposed in each recommendation would be ascertained. It was further agreed that this information, together with any outstanding information about their activities that Faculties might wish to make available, would be submitted for the information of the EC at its meeting of 2 February 2010.
- 4.6** Ms McKenna undertook to make available to the EC a brief document outlining the current HEA RGAM available for different types of students, as a means of informing further discussion on the above issues.

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

### **5. Brief summary of ‘Placing Bologna in Context’ conference, October 2010**

Noted that this conference had involved both taking stock of progress to date in respect of the implementation of Bologna-related actions and identifying the challenges to be tackled in the future (e.g. the need to encourage mobility of staff and students, take-up of the Diploma Supplement and, more generally, engagement with Bologna). Noted that it had been apparent from the conference that it would be important to continue to implement actions as well as articulating ideas and principles. The usefulness of two of the presentations from the perspective of graduate attributes (specifically, ethical awareness and innovation/creativity) was noted.

**6. Validation proposal: MTeach degree**

Agreed to refer this proposal for detailed consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 18 January 2011. The following were noted as being among the issues to be discussed by the Subgroup:

- consideration might possibly be given to a slightly different title, especially in view of the importance of title for marketing purposes; it was noted that, whatever title is ultimately used, there should be a distinction between this title and titles including references to 'teaching and learning', which tend to refer to qualifications for those teaching in higher education
- it would be helpful to discuss the extent to which the programme is likely to attract the proposed numbers of students
- it would be helpful to ascertain whether or not the programme would be suitable for those working in niche areas, e.g. those teaching in prisons
- there is concern about the feasibility, for a part-time student, of obtaining 60 credits in one year
- there would need to be a reference in the documentation to overall classifications (distinction, credit, pass) to be awarded to those who might exit at Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma level

The list of members of the proposed Accreditation Board was approved.

**7. Proposed new pathway – Bachelor of Nursing Theory – on the Bachelor of Nursing Studies programme**

Approved subject to confirmation of the date on which the proposal had been approved by the Faculty Teaching Committee.

**8. Proposed stand-alone module in the School of Nursing: Contemporary issues in working with the older person**

Approved.

**9. Request for Certificate of Professional Development status to be awarded to three ten-credit modules previously approved as stand-alone modules at Level 8 (School of Nursing)**

Decision deferred so as to allow for the convening of a short-life working group which will make recommendations on: (a) the approval procedures which should be used, in general in the University, to create an award on the basis of previously-approved stand-alone modules (recommendations to be made to the EC at its



meeting of 2 February 2011); (b) issues relating to the NFQ level of Undergraduate Certificates awarded by the University and credit volumes pertaining to Certificates of Continuing Professional Development programmes (recommendations to be made to the University Standards Committee at its meeting of 3 February 2011). Noted that it was intended that, provided an award was approved in respect of the three modules in question, it would be made to all eligible students who had taken, or were currently taking, the modules.

**10. Any other business**

- 10.1** Noted that the President, Professor Brian MacCraith, had requested that a working group be set up to make recommendations on issues relating to virtual learning, student engagement with learning and new student learning approaches. It is to be chaired by Professor Scott and will include membership from the OVPLI, Oscail, the School of Education Studies and Information Systems and Services. It is deemed to be convening under the auspices of the EC though the membership is not confined to EC members. EC members who might wish to join the working group are requested to let Ms McDermott know very shortly.
- 10.2** Noted that the recent report from the Department of Education and Skills entitled *Better Literacy and Numeracy for Young People: A Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools* (November 2010) was available on line.
- 10.3** The following report was noted: *ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2010*.
- 10.4** The following report was noted: *DCU Students' Union 2011: Summary Report on DCU SU Performance and Student Engagement at DCU*.

**Date of next meeting:**

**Wednesday 2 February 2011, 2.00 p.m. in A204**

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

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