

## **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

Wednesday 13 January 2010

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, 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

**In attendance:** Ms Aisling McKenna (for Items 3, 4 and 5)

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

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

The agenda was adopted subject to Item 10 being deemed to be subject to discussion and the inclusion of two submissions under Item 13.

#### **2. Minutes of the meeting of 2 December 2009**

The minutes were confirmed subject to substitution of the first two sentences of Item 3.10 by the following:

Noted that the first meeting of the subgroup set up to make recommendations in relation to the desired distinguishing characteristics of a DCU graduate had held its first meeting and that its work would be informed by input from the Learning Innovation Advisory Panel and the Student Experience Committee. It will also be informed by the work being undertaken by Dr MacKeogh on the ideal balance in terms of numbers of students from different categories – undergraduate, postgraduate (PGT and PGR) and so forth (see Item 3.9 above).

They were then signed by the Chair. It was noted that Mr Dowling had joined the subgroup referred to in Item 3.10. (See also Item 4.2 below.)

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

- 3.1** Noted that Ms Jennifer Bruton, Associate Dean for Education in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, was convening two working groups, one on systems-level access at Progression and Awards Boards and the other on procedures for enabling staff access, on the basis agreed by Executive, to student data, and that she would streamline the tasks of these two groups as much as possible to avoid duplication of work. (Item 2)
- 3.2** Noted that a proposal on AP(E)L would be submitted for consideration by the University Standards Committee at its meeting of 4 February 2010. (Item 3.1)
- 3.3** Noted that a report on the HEA Labour Market Activation Initiative would be made to the 3 March 2010 meeting of the EC and that it would be important for comments to be submitted to Ms Hughes by the end of January so that she could liaise with Mr Seamus Fox, who will be leading on the Initiative from DCU's perspective for a period from 1 February. Ms Hughes undertook to liaise with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education with a view to obtaining additional comments from Faculties. (Item 3.6)
- 3.4** Noted that suggested wording related to the responsibilities of Heads of School and Chairs of Programme Boards would be made available to the EC in due course. (Item 3.7)
- 3.5** Noted that Dr MacKeogh would make available to the subgroup on the DCU student profile and graduate characteristics (see Item 4.2 below) the results of a comparative exercise on student profiles across DCU and other institutions which she had previously conducted and had now updated. Noted that the discussion on the student profile and graduate characteristics was likely, in due course, to benefit from the outcome of the upcoming Institutional Review to the extent that it would consider these matters. (Items 3.9 and 3.10)
- 3.6** Noted that a significant item on student persistence on programmes, and related issues, would be on the agenda for the 3 March 2010 meeting of the EC. (Items 3.12, 4.1 and 4.2) (See also Item 4.1 below.)
- 3.7** Noted that a range of issues relating to Progression and Awards Boards would be discussed and agreed by the University Standards Committee and that a brief report on the outcome would be made to the EC. The Chair noted that the remits of the EC and the USC were becoming more distinct over the course of 2009/10 and also

- that the workload of the USC was particularly significant in this academic year owing to the implementation of the new Marks and Standards and the range of issues that arose from this and required discussion. (Item 3.13)
- 3.8** Noted that USC was in the process of agreeing procedures for making programme-specific information available to students in a timely and standardised manner. (Item 3.15)
- 3.9** Noted that the pilot Teaching Enhancement Exercise had been extended from DCU Business School to all Faculties and that it would be important to report on the outcome to the EC at the earliest opportunity. (Item 3.16)
- 3.10** Noted that the USC was in the process of agreeing procedures for administering external examiners' reports. (Item 3.17)
- 3.11** Noted that the changes to the taught programmes in the School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, approved by the Education Committee on 4 November 2009, had been noted by the USC at its meeting of 3 December 2009. (Item 3.18)
- 3.12** Noted that a subgroup of the USC had been set up to make recommendations on approval procedures for a range of issues including special-purpose awards and changes to programmes that do not require (re)validation and (re)accreditation and that it was likely that the recommendations, following approval by the USC, would also be submitted to the EC for approval (because it is envisaged that the EC will be the approving body for the relevant issues). (Item 3.19)
- 3.13** Noted that the meeting of the Accreditation Board for the proposed BSc in Horticulture was scheduled for 29 January 2010. (Item 3.20)
- 3.14** Noted that the preparations for the accreditation of the proposed Graduate Diploma/MSc in Materials Engineering were ongoing. (Item 3.21)
- 3.15** Noted that the preparations for the accreditation of the proposed subject *Science Studies* on the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education programmes in St Patrick's College were ongoing, though some changes to the programme as originally validated were under consideration. (Item 3.22)
- 3.16** Noted that discussions had taken place in Faculties, some time previously, about the desirability or otherwise of holding Semester 1 examinations for first-year undergraduate students and that the broad consensus had been that they should remain but possibly be limited in number. On this basis, some Programme Boards had reduced the number of such examinations. Agreed that Ms McKenna and

Dr MacKeogh would liaise on this issue following the publication of the Semester 1 examination results for 2009/10 in the general context of the analysis of issues arising from these results, and that this would form part of the major item on student persistence to be discussed at the 3 March 2010 meeting of the EC (see Item 3.6 above). Ms McKenna will also, as part of the analysis, address the issue of student non-attendance at (as distinct from failure to pass) these examinations. Dr Bohan will also report to the EC, at either the 3 February or 3 March meetings, on the relevance to student persistence of (a) financial considerations and (b) student expectations of programmes vis-à-vis the reality they experience on entry. (Item 4.2)

- 3.17** Noted that final proposals on the programme ‘health check’ procedures would be drawn up, and submitted to the EC, once discussions in Faculties on the fitness for purpose of the proposed metrics had concluded. Noted that the data from the HEA ‘First Destination’ graduate surveys would not form part of the ‘health check’ procedures. Agreed, however, that Dr Bohan would obtain details from the Careers Service, which is responsible for submitting survey data to the HEA on behalf of the university, on the target and actual response rates, the types of information collected, and what is done with it, and would make these details available to the Chair and the Deans of Faculty. (Item 4.3)
- 3.18** Noted that Ms Hughes and the Deans of Faculty were in discussion to identify possible areas of collaboration between Faculties and Oscal. (Item 5)

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

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

#### **4.1 Student progression issues**

Noted that a major item on these issues would be submitted for consideration by the EC at its meeting of 3 March 2010 (see also Item 3.6 above). (Some related items will need to be followed up at a later date, however.) Ms McKenna is to re-run the analysis of student withdrawals from programmes after 22 January (the date after which students, following withdrawal, become liable for the payment of full fees for the following academic session if they resume their studies then). She will also hold focus groups or, if considered preferable, one-to-one sessions with students who have withdrawn and students repeating first year on either an examination-only or a full-year basis. The Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education are to identify particular problem areas/modules following the publication of the Semester 1 examination results and to liaise on this with Ms McKenna and Dr MacKeogh.

## **4.2 Report from subgroup on DCU student profile and graduate characteristics**

Noted that the subgroup had met once and was due to meet again on 3 February 2010. The Chair noted that there were several potential applications of the outcome of the subgroup's work: it could, for example, be used to inform discussions on marketing policy, future programme provision or the optimum balance between different types of students. Noted that the ultimate aim of the subgroup's work was to benefit (a) students and (b) the university from an institutional perspective. The importance of ensuring that the university was in a position to provide evidence for any statements that might be made about graduate characteristics was noted.

## **4.3 Outstanding goals: emerging subject areas; research-led teaching**

**4.3.1** With regard to emerging subject areas, the Chair stressed the importance of ensuring that the university's research strengths informed the development of taught programmes, including undergraduate taught programmes. A discussion took place about the means by which, more generally, students could be made aware of these research strengths, for example by means of open days to publicise them, Faculty-based seminar series or the development of a practice whereby undergraduate students could expect to be taught by senior researchers at some stage of their studies and thereby exposed to cutting-edge research by those who were undertaking it. The possibility of offering 'global' modules, based on research strengths (e.g. in such areas as ethics, sustainability or entrepreneurship) was also discussed, though it was noted that it should not be assumed that students would invariably avail of such modules if offered. It was agreed that Professor O'Kennedy would outline to the EC, at its meeting of 3 February 2010, the possibilities inherent in the Academic Framework for Innovation for the development of such 'global' modules as well as, more generally, flexibility of module provision.

**4.3.2** With regard to research-led teaching, it was noted that Ms Morag Munro, Acting Head of the Learning Innovation Unit, and Dr Declan Raftery, Director of Research Support Services, would submit a paper for consideration by the EC at its meeting of 3 February 2010. This paper is to include consideration of the definition of research-led learning.

## **5. THE-QS World Rankings: issues of relevance to DCU**

Ms Aisling McKenna made a presentation on DCU's performance in the 2009 rankings vis-à-vis that of other universities both nationally and internationally, noting that, while the performance had improved over other years, the possibility existed that the proposed changes to the ranking criteria in 2010 would influence it,

and possibly in an adverse sense. She noted that Times Higher Education would, from 2010, be in partnership with Thomson Reuters rather than QS in developing the rankings and that it would be important for the university to have an input into the selection of the criteria. The Chair requested the members of the EC to consider what criteria might be proposed and to submit recommendations to Ms McKenna.

**6. *New Horizons: the report of the Joint Future Thinking Taskforce on Universities (Scotland)***

The Chair stressed the importance of scanning the external environment, for example by means of reports such as this one, for developments of relevance to higher education generally and the university in particular. Noted that it would be desirable for a range of relevant reports to be made available on line to the EC, and agreed that Professor O’Kennedy, Ms Hughes and Ms McDermott would give consideration to how this could best be organised.

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

**7. Validation proposal: BSc in Health Studies**

**7.1** Agreed to submit this proposal for consideration by the Validation Subgroup of the EC at its meeting of 19 January 2010.

**7.2** The following were noted as being among the issues to be noted and/or discussed by the Subgroup:

- The proposal is for a three-year degree without a work placement. The question arises of implications for future programmes and for the attractiveness of this particular programme.
- The question of the relevance of the programme, in the light of a possible new relationship with the RCSI, needs to be explored.
- It is indicated that evidence of demand is still being sought. It would be preferable if demand had been ascertained by this point.
- As some financial issues arise, it would be helpful if the Head of the School of Nursing could attend the Validation Subgroup meeting. It would be necessary to clarify the extent to which the modules listed are new modules and, where they are, the question arises of how they can be funded within existing staffing. A question arises as to why the fee income is not equal to the number of students multiplied by the fee per student.
- The possibility of making Psychology a core module in Year 1 should be explored.

- A question arises about the need for/likely usefulness of the module entitled 'Becoming a university student'.
- There is a possibility that the availability of modules may be particularly dependent on the interests of specific staff members.
- While the learning outcomes are clearly specified, a question arises, in the case of some of them, as to how they would actually be assessed.

## **8. Validation proposal: Graduate Certificate in Digital Marketing**

**8.1** Agreed to submit this proposal for consideration by the Validation Subgroup at its meeting of 19 January 2010.

**8.2** The following were noted as being among the issues to be noted and/or discussed by the Subgroup:

- A question arises as to whether or not the programme could be offered over a longer period of time and on the basis of blended or e-learning (it was noted none the less that industry demand appeared to be for the type of programme currently proposed).
- A question arises as to the appropriateness of the sum indicated each year as 'School non-pay' and the issue of why the fee income is not equal to the number of students multiplied by the fee per student.
- The involvement of adjunct lecturers was noted as having implications in the context of the Employment Control Framework.

## **9. Proposals from the Faculty of Engineering and Computing in relation to programmes in Electronic Engineering**

Approved.

## **10. Proposal from the Faculty of Science and Health to restructure the MSc in Bioinformatics**

Decision deferred pending the following:

- inclusion of confirmation that the School of Computing is also involved in the provision of the programme
- submission of the opinion of an external expert, and of the response of the Programme Board to that opinion, if required
- further information on the role of NUI Maynooth and Teagasc in the delivery of the programme.

**11. Proposal from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences to restructure and retitle the MA sa Chleachtas Dátheangach/MA in Bilingual Practice**

Approved.

**12. Proposals on restructuring the taught Master's programmes in Mater Dei Institute of Education**

Approved.

**13. Any other business**

**13.1** Agreed that the membership of the EC should henceforth include a representative of the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and that this group would be asked to make a nomination.

**13.2** Noted that a request had been made for a proposed programme to be submitted for validation in February 2010, on an exceptional basis (as validation opportunities are normally not made available in February), and that, if the proposal were available in time it would be submitted for consideration by the EC at its meeting of 3 February and, if appropriate, by the Validation Subgroup on 9 February. This was agreed.

**Date of next meeting:**

**Wednesday 3 February 2010, 2.00 p.m. in A204**

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

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