

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday 14 October 2009

2.00-3.20 p.m. in AG01

PRESENT:

S-J Belton
F Blin
D Brabazon
O Bree
C Brennan
P Brereton
J Bruton
J Burzlaff
J Carroll
P Donnelly
J Doyle
T Draper
M Farren
B Flood
S Fox
N Gathergood
J Geraghty
S Hashmi
M Henry
T Hogan
Md S Hossain
G Hughes
J Hughes
M Irwin-Bannon

M Kelly
B Kelly
S Knowlton
H Lechleiter
T Leufer
C Long
L Looney
J Lynch
C Mac an Bhaird
B McConalogue
L McDermott (Secretary)
C McDonagh
D McGann
C McGonagle
A McGrady
J McKenna
K MacKeogh
J McManis
A Moran
J-P Mosnier
P McMorrow
C Mac Murchaidh
A Morrissey
J Morris

M Munro
G Murphy
J Murphy
N Murphy
L Muzellec
J Needham
M Nic Giolla Mhichíl
C Nic Pháidín
P O'Byrne
A-G Olabi
E O'Riordan
A Pearson-Evans
P Preston
J Quigley
A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)
A Sinnott
M Smyth
A Stover
R Tobin
F von Prondzynski (Chair)
M Ward
A Wickham
S Wickham
P Young

APOLOGIES:

B Casey	L Hourihane	M Shine Thompson
J Connolly	S Ingle	D Sinclair
E Conway	P McNamara	P Smith
J Costello	P Meleady	A Way
J Dowling	B Pierce	J Williams
P Flood	P Sheehan	P Willis
C Holland		

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the transfer of Items 7 and 11 from Section C to Section B.

A: Minutes and related issues**2. Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Council of 29 June 2009**

The minutes, which had previously been confirmed, were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1** The Chair outlined the measures being taken by the university to meet its obligations in the context of the Employment Control Framework while also aiming to fill essential vacancies to the extent possible. (Item 3.2)
- 3.2** With regard to the discussions under way between the university, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, the Chair noted that it was expected to have initial proposals on co-operation across the institutions available for submission to the Governing Authority at its December 2009 meeting, with more detailed implementation plans being drawn up at a later stage. A meeting for all university staff on this issue will be organised (see also Item 4.3 below). The Chair noted also that the report of the Strategic Review of Higher Education was due in early 2010. The agenda for the meeting of the Academic Council of 9 December 2009 will include an item relating to trends in the organisation of Irish higher education. (Item 6.2)

- 3.3** The Deputy President/Registrar reported that the working group on subject provision, on which she and Mr Martin Conry are the university's representatives, had identified postgraduate programmes as being particularly amenable to shared provision and had noted that such provision was already being catered for by means of developments such as structured PhDs. She noted the potential of the Academic Framework for Innovation in facilitating flexibility of provision in relation to undergraduate programmes, as well as the intention of the Education Committee to maintain an overview of programme provision generally to identify any areas in which viability might be a concern. In the context of the very difficult economic climate, she encouraged Council members to be proactive in seeking ways to maintain the highest possible quality in the delivery of their programmes while keeping in mind the importance of a prudent approach to resources. (Item 6.3)

4. President's report

- 4.1** The Chair noted that, on the basis of the recently-agreed Revised Programme for Government, it was unlikely that student tuition fees would be introduced in the near term. It remains to be seen whether or not there will be a change to the registration fee.
- 4.2** With regard to the introduction of five hundred additional primary teaching posts under the Revised Programme for Government, the Chair noted that, while this was a welcome development in a broader sense, it could put further financial pressure on higher education if the funding is taken from other parts of the education vote in the Book of Estimates.
- 4.3** Opportunities for discussing current developments will be made available to all staff over the coming months. (See also Item 3.2 above.)

B: Policy and strategy issues

5. Strategic implementation

The Chair noted that, because of the rapidly-changing external environment, it had been agreed not to submit the new strategic plan to Governing Authority until December 2009, by which time the inter-institutional dimension (referred to in Item 3.2 above) would be available for inclusion. The launch of the plan will incorporate an acknowledgement of the fact that DCU has been in existence as a university for twenty years.

6. Proposals on revising the academic calendar

6.1 On behalf of the working group charged with discussing possible revisions to the calendar, Dr Sheelagh Wickham presented the proposals. The following issues were raised in the ensuing discussion:

- the university is undergoing considerable change in terms of the Academic Framework for Innovation, Marks and Standards and alignment with the Bologna process more broadly; this raises the issue of whether or not it would be preferable to postpone major changes to the calendar until after these other changes have been implemented
- some programmes, e.g. those which involve clinical placements, have to base their calendar on agreements made with external partner organisations which cover a number of years into the future
- financial commitments have already been made to Campus Residences Ltd. for September 2010 on the basis of a calendar similar to the current one
- if there is to be co-operation with other institutions such as RCSI and NUI Maynooth (see Item 3.2 above), consideration might be given, in due course, to an overall alignment of calendars across the institutions
- the extent to which elements such as reading weeks can feasibly be treated as optional varies across programmes
- the possibility of losing a study week in Semester 2, as indicated in the proposals, is a matter of concern to students
- the increased use of continuous assessment as a way of meeting this concern could be considered, though account would also need to be taken of consequent increases in workload for academic staff
- it would be useful to take into consideration the importance of maintaining a balance between Semester 1 and Semester 2 in terms of teaching load
- the implications of changes to the calendar for a range of student-related issues, such as examination appeals, would need to be examined in detail
- it would be very desirable to reach agreement on the optimum time to be made available between the end of examinations and the production of results at Progression and Awards Boards; this regularly proves a difficult issue
- consideration might be given to a relatively minor shift in the starting time of the academic year, e.g. of a week, for 2010/11, with the option of more radical change to follow
- consideration might be given to offering a resit examination opportunity in January to allow students who begin their studies in Semester 2 an opportunity to resit within the same academic year; it was noted that this is essentially a Marks and Standards issue and would be discussed in this context
- it would be helpful if background information were made available in relation to some of the points made in the proposals.

- 6.2** Agreed that the working group would reconvene to consider the above issues and would submit revised proposals to a future meeting of the Council. Agreed that the opportunity to discuss the current proposals had been a useful one which had raised a number of interesting issues.
- 6.3** Agreed that the draft calendar for 2010/11 would be submitted for approval by the Council at its meeting of 9 December 2009 and that it would be based on the dates currently in use.
- 6.4** On behalf of the Council, the Chair thanked Dr Wickham and the other members of the working group for their very significant work on this issue to date.

7. Policy on due diligence

Approved subject to the small number of amendments which had been recommended by Executive at its meeting of 13 October 2009. The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the policy would be informed, over time, from experience gained by its application in the development of relationships with external organisations.

11. Reports from Autumn 2009 examinations/Progression and Awards Boards

Noted and approved. The Deputy President/Registrar noted that a considerable number of post-Progression and Award Board amendments had been made in June 2009 and that she intended to discuss this matter with Programme Chairs, the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and Registry staff to determine the extent to which there were areas experiencing particular difficulties and, if so, what measures might be taken to reduce these difficulties. The matter will be included as an agenda item on the 10 February 2010 meeting of the Council.

C: Items for formal approval/noting

8. Register of programmes accredited in 2008/09

Noted.

9. Register of Academic Council members 2009/10

Noted.

10. Register of Education Committee, University Standards Committee and Graduate Studies Board member 2009/10

Noted.

12. Report from Autumn 2009 Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees

Noted and approved.

13. Report from the Appeals Board, Research Appeals Board and Disciplinary Appeals Committee 2008/09

Noted.

14. Any other business

The Chair undertook to write to Mr Shane Kenny, Director of Public Affairs and Media Relations, on behalf of the Council to wish him well following his recent illness.

Date of next meeting:

<p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday 9 December 2009 2.00 p.m. in AG01</p>

Signed: _____
President

Date: _____