

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Wednesday 28 April 2021

2.00 p.m. – 4.10 p.m. via Zoom

Present: Dr Sarahjane Belton, Dr Claire Bohan, Professor Mark Brown, Professor Michelle Butler, Dr Brian Corcoran, Professor Derek Hand, Ms Margaret Irwin-Bannon (Secretary), Mr Billy Kelly, Professor Anne Looney, Professor Lisa Looney (Chair), Dr Ken McDonagh, Ms Aisling McKenna, Ms Pauline Mooney, Professor Colm O’Gorman, Mr Lucien Waugh-Daly and Dr Blanaid White

Apologies: Professor Greg Hughes

In attendance: Item 4: Ms Rachel Keegan

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda as circulated was adopted, subject to the addition of one item under AOB.

2. Minutes of the meeting of Education Committee, 31 March 2021

The minutes of 31 March 2021 were approved and it was noted the final version would be formally signed at a later date.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of 31 March 2021

3.1 It was noted that the revised FE Entry requirements would apply from September 2022, as it was not logistically possible to make the agreed changes mid-way through the application cycle for entry in September 2021 (Item 3.6).

3.2 It was noted that work on employability statements is ongoing. The item is scheduled for consideration by Education Committee at its May 2021 meeting (Item 3.2).

3.3 It was noted that work is ongoing on a process by which Education Committee would maintain oversight of its strategic commitments and activities. The item is scheduled to be considered by Education Committee at its May 2021 meeting (Item 3.4).

- 3.4 It was noted that the guidance documentation (to include additional contextual information on the vision for the DCU Futures programmes) for the DCU Futures Accreditation Boards was completed (Item 3.5).
- 3.5 It was noted that a position paper on Joint, Double and Dual Awards is on the agenda of this meeting (Item 3.2).
- 3.6 It was noted that a document on widening participation is on the agenda of this meeting and all related activities including those noted in matters arising are captured in the document for consideration (Item 3.3,3.7).
- 3.7 It was noted that the documentation for the Graduate Certificate in Charity Management and Governance documentation had been amended to reflect a 'special purpose award' (Item 6).

The Director of Quality Promotion highlighted that DCU's commitments in terms of Further Education and Employability Statements are relevant to DCU's Mission-based Performance Compact with the HEA. It was noted by the Chair that progress in relation to both agendas was particularly welcome in that context.

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION/NOTING

4. Joint, Double and Dual Awards (Position Paper)

The Chair provided the context for the policy paper, outlining that DCU highly values partnership, and has a collaboration provision protocol which has been developing over time, as particular collaborations have arisen. Joint, double and dual awards are the more complex of DCU's collaborative provision arrangements. The Chair highlighted it was intended that the Committee would give further consideration to the position paper, but that the focus of this first discussion was to form a view on the need to define the Joint, Double and Dual Award terms, and also to give consideration to preserving joint awards to contexts of strategic impact.

Ms Pauline Mooney and Ms Rachel Keegan made a presentation summarising the paper as circulated.

The scope of the paper was set out as follows:

- To explore and come to an agreed understanding of the definitions of Joint, Double and Dual awards, taking cognisance of relevant National and European policies, standards and guidelines. It was noted that, where relevant, the proposal would also apply to research programmes and resultant awards
- To highlight strategic, quality assurance and operation considerations that might inform DCU's future policy in respect of joint, double and dual awards
- To consider principles and criteria that would form the basis of institutional policy as it relates to joint, double and dual awards, and should they be approved, they will be integrated within the DCU Curriculum Quality Assurance Framework.

Existing definitions and the inconsistency of terminology was highlighted from the literature and DCU definitions were proposed which align to the European Consortium of Accreditation definitions, and which are situated within the DCU Collaborative Provision protocol.

The considerations for entering collaborative provision arrangements were outlined and the principles and criteria for consideration with respect to joint and double awards were also provided.

In the discussion which ensued the following were highlighted:

- The definitions were very welcome and timely in light of current negotiations with potential partners
- It was an important piece of work from a quality assurance point of view and if definitions are agreed, it would require further work on developing a quality assurance framework, and consideration of how these engagements are reported
- That collaborative provision arrangements are transformative
- That the focus should be on 'strategic impact' of collaborative arrangements.

It was agreed that the Academic Secretary would circulate discussion points for Executive Deans to raise with their Faculty Management Boards, with a view to Education Committee making a final decision at the September 2021 meeting, on DCU definitions on Joint, Double and Dual award, and consideration of criteria that might provide an evidentiary basis for the assessment of the strategic impact of collaborations which, it is proposed, would result in joint or double (multiple) awards and related decision-making.

5. Plan for Widening Participation

The Chair provided the context to the document, as circulated, noting that its content is built on the extensive work of Student Support and Development. The document provides the definition and scope of widening participation and lists the priority actions for 2021 and 2022. She proposed that Education Committee would adopt the seven priority action points for 2021-2022.

In the discussion that followed the following points were raised:

- It was clarified that the figure of 4.1% of 'mature' students was exclusive of DCU Connected students. In the subsequent discussion it was noted that in the plan, part time or remote students with specific support needs would be included.
- In a related point about national student profile definitions and where the different categories of student sit within the data, it was agreed that DCU should improve the capture, classification and application of student data to improve monitoring and support for the success of under-represented groups.
- It was noted that it would be useful to develop a map of widening participation activities and where responsibility lies for the actions to be taken
- It was noted that it may be useful to have a more flexible approach to facilitate the offering of unfilled COA places to students, potentially using a pre-cleared waiting list. It was noted that this may be a fee status issue primarily.

- It would be useful to examine what meaningful ‘supports’ could extend to; an example was given of the facility to pay fees in monthly instalments
- It was requested with respect to point seven, ‘contribute to the upcoming HEA review of the national Access policy’ that DCU makes a contribution about the funding model and the challenge for part time and distance learners.

The Plan for DCU’s Strategic Focus on Extending Educational Opportunity was approved, subject to changes being made with respect to the classification of student data, the inclusion of part time or remote students and the contribution at national level to the funding modules as it relates to part time or distance learners. The Chair undertook to include the suggested changes and recirculate the amended document for noting.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

6. Faculty of Engineering and Computing: BEng/MEng in Mechatronic Engineering: integrated masters

The proposal to introduce an integrated BEng/MEng in Mechatronic Engineering was approved. It was noted that it would be implemented from September 2021, where incoming third years would be offered the option of following the MEng pathway.

It was requested that the award title in Section 2 would be corrected to MEng in Mechatronic Engineering.

7. Faculty of Engineering and Computing: BEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering proposed exit award of BSc in Electronic and Computer Technology (level 8)

The Dean of the Faculty of Computing outlined that the proposed exit award (195 ECTS credits, 15 of which would be taken in the fourth year) was intended for use in exceptional circumstances.

The following points of feedback was raised:

- The decision to approve this exit award would set a precedent, both in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing and across the University
- If an exit with a specific number of credits was approved, then it would not be feasible to limit it to specific students with exceptional circumstances only
- There is a need to look across the University sector and establish comparable practice (it was noted that UCD and TCD have an exit award at 180 ECTS credits but have a 3 plus 2 model).

Education Committee decided, given the precedent this would set, that the matter warranted further consideration and deferred the decision on the specific exit. The Chair suggested that the Deans and Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning would give this further consideration with a view to a universal application across the University.

8. Faculty of Engineering and Computing: MEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering: new major in Future Network Technologies

The major in Future Network Technologies on the MEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering was approved.

9. Faculty of Engineering and Computing: MEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering, Wuhan University request

The Dean of the Faculty outlined that a request had come from Wuhan University to enable current students to complete their programme by the summer of 2021. As a result, it is proposed that the current MEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering students would be offered an accelerated timeline, on an 'opt-in' basis.

This request was approved by Education Committee on the basis of the 'opt-in' choice for students. It was requested that the term 'graduate in the summer' be changed to 'have award approved in the summer'.

The document also outlined a new structure for the MEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering (MECEW) and the Access Programme (Wuhan University) MEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering (MEAW) which would facilitate approval of the award on an ongoing basis at the summer Progression and Award Boards.

Education Committee approved the proposed structure and asked that the following items would be addressed:

- To investigate if there would there be implications for the Stay Back Visa Option for international students
- It was highlighted that the module EE5002 for the new structure would be delivered remotely, however, the existing module descriptor as presented on Akari, indicates a high level of contact hours
- The project module in the new structure has 22.5 credits, but is using a module code that reflects 30 credits. This should have a new module code
- It was recommended that assurances be sought that the changes to the programme with respect to its structure and distribution of mode of delivery do not undermine approval by the Chinese Ministry of the programme .

10. Faculty of Engineering and Computing Springboard funding: Graduate Certificate in Energy Systems and Decarbonisation

A decision on this programme was deferred to the May 2021 Education Committee, as feedback from the external examiner was awaited.

11. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: Notification of Erasmus Mundus funding application: European Master in Law, Data and Artificial Intelligence

Education Committee discussed the document notifying the Committee of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Application and recommended the following queries/ issues would be addressed in advance of the validation and accreditation process:

- That due diligence would be completed in advance of the validation submission as otherwise the validation could only be approved *subject to due diligence*. It was noted that the section provided in the memorandum dealt with the academic perspective but the due diligence process should be related to such items as potential partner's solvency, their practices, etc. This is a separate process to that of academic approvals
- The overall accreditation process should be clarified. DCU would need reassurance that an accreditation process equivalent to the DCU process is happening in parallel within the other institutions; and/or the DCU Award and accreditation process will be accepted as the accreditation process for the joint award in the other institutions and jurisdictions; or another mode of accreditation would be agreed e.g. the European approach to quality assurance for joint programmes.
- The point was made that validation and accreditation processes are not rubber-stamping exercises, and independence of these processes is central to university autonomy and meeting DCU's statutory responsibilities. It should be acknowledged in the funding application that there has to be provision for potential changes to the programme as a result of the agreed approach to accreditation. The University should not be put in a position where assessment for funding by an external body, is assumed to override or remove the relevance of DCU's processes.
- It was noted that there is provision for English language classes in advance of commencement of the first year in DCU and queried if the equivalent would be available in French or Spanish in the second year mobility?
- It was noted that it would be very important that the programme shows clear evidence of progression in subjects from year 1 to year 2 when students move from one institution to another.
- Clarification was sought on whether students domiciled in Ireland would be eligible for a scholarship if students have to have a minimum of two mobilities, and because of being domiciled in Ireland that they would have only one mobility. If this is the case, it was suggested that the partners given consideration to measures to address this inequity.
- It was noted the intention currently is that the programme would be submitted for validation at the meeting of Education Committee in May 2021

12. Any other business

The Chair requested, due to an anticipated higher than usual volume of items for consideration, that Committee members would hold the scheduled slot for Education Committee Standing Committee on 1 June 2021 for an extended meeting of Education Committee.

The Chair acknowledged the volume of work that had been completed by colleagues which was represented in all the documentation considered by Education Committee.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Date of next meeting:
Wednesday, 26 May 2021
at 2.00 pm via Zoom

and

Tuesday 1 June 2021 at 3.30 pm via Zoom