EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 2 April 2014

2.00-3.40 p.m. in A204

Present:	Professor Eithne Guilfoyle (Chair), Dr John Doyle, Mr Billy Kelly, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Professor Barry McMullin, Mr Martin Molony, Dr Anne Sinnott, Dr Fionnuala Waldron, Dr Sheelagh Wickham
Apologies:	Dr Claire Bohan, Professor Mark Brown, Professor John Costello, Professor Alan Harvey, Dr Sarah Ingle, Dr Lisa Looney, Ms Aisling McKenna, Mr Ciarán O'Connor

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1.   Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2.   Minutes of the meeting of 5 March 2014

The minutes were confirmed and were signed by the Chair.

3.   Matters arising from the minutes

3.1   It was <u>noted</u> that processes and templates for collaborative research supervision had been discussed by the Graduate Research Studies Board at its meeting of 6 March 2014 and that the outcome of the discussion would be reported to the EC at its meeting of 7 May 2014. (Item 3.1)

3.2   It was <u>noted</u> that discussions were in progress about a number of issues relating to the use of mobile telephone data.   (Item 3.2)

3.3   It was <u>noted</u> that the working group on challenging modules was continuing its deliberations. (Items 3.5 and 7.3)

3.4 It was <u>noted</u> that the combined policy on feedback and assessment would be placed on the web pages of the Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning. (Item 3.6)

3.5 It was <u>noted</u> that the working group on the student records system would shortly submit its report to the Chief Operations Officer. This report is not a specification for a proposed new system; rather, it focuses on describing the strengths and weaknesses of the current system with a view to facilitating University
decision-making about the appropriate steps to take in this matter. (Item 3.7)

3.6 It was <u>noted</u> that Mr Ciarán McGivern, Director of Finance, was in the process of drawing up a policy and procedures with respect to the implications, for students, of non-payment of fees and the appropriate steps to be taken by academic staff when interacting with such students. The importance of ensuring that all procedures are compatible with Registry procedures was <u>noted</u>. (Item 3.8)

3.7 It was <u>noted</u> that the e-portfolio initiative would formally be launched in due course. (Item 3.10)

3.8 It was <u>noted</u> that a report on the working of APR in each Faculty would be made to the EC at its meeting of 7 May 2014. (Item 3.11)

3.9 It was <u>noted</u> that the working group on timetabling was continuing its deliberations. (Item 3.12)

3.10   It was <u>noted</u> that the possibility of providing an information pack to incoming Heads of School had been referred to the appropriate parties in the University. (Item 6.2.4)

3.11 It was <u>noted</u> that per-Faculty information on students deemed at risk of failing the first year of undergraduate programmes had been sent to the Deans of Faculty. (Item 7.1)

3.12 It was <u>noted</u> that, at its meeting of 11 March 2014, the Validation Subgroup had approved the proposed Bachelor of Early Childhood Education for further development with a view to accreditation. (Item 9)

3.13 It was <u>noted</u> that the proposed new pathway on the MA in Ethics was under consideration in the Faculty of Science and Health. (Item 12)

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4.   Update on activities undertaken within the IUA

4.1   The Chair <u>noted</u> that, at their meeting of 31 March 2014, the IUA Registrars had expressed concern at the low level of participation in the Irish Survey of Student Engagement 2013 (in this connection, it was <u>noted</u> that participation rates for 2014 are even lower). This has implications for the usefulness of the results at institutional level, though it may be possible to identify useful information on the basis of the results when considered at national level. The Registrars are to recommend to the IUA Council that the results not be published at institutional level. (See also Item 5 below.)

4.2   The Chair <u>noted</u> that changes are planned over the next two years to the governance of the HEAR and DARE schemes nationally, with a view to streamlining it, and that she had been tasked with chairing a new policy working group which is to make recommendations on the issues (there is also an operational working group). It was <u>noted</u> that, in certain cases and with particular reference to DCU, applicants who are disadvantaged primarily from an economic perspective tend to predominate in the success rates through HEAR, in contrast to applicants disadvantaged primarily from a social perspective; it was <u>noted</u> too that the latter group tend to require more intensive post-entry support than the former. The IUA Presidents are to discuss a request from the Gaelic Players' Association for designated admissions routes for their members.

4.3   The Chair <u>noted</u> that a meeting had taken place between representatives of the Teaching Council, the IUA and higher education institutions to discuss the implications of recent Teaching Council stipulations (about subject areas that must be covered if registration is to be successful) for students already on teacher education programmes who do not graduate with their cohort and find themselves at risk of not being able to register because of not having covered the requisite subject areas. The importance of transitional arrangements (on a group rather than a case-by-case basis) for such students was <u>noted</u>.

5.   Report on the Irish Survey of Student Engagement

As noted above (see Item 4.1), the rate of participation in the 2014 is low. It stands at 12%, having been boosted by being linked to courses in Moodle (appreciation was expressed to Dr Mark Glynn, Director of the Learning Innovation Unit, and Mr John Doyle of ISS for having facilitated this). The outcomes of the 2014 survey will be available within two weeks. As noted above also (see item 4.1), it is not considered desirable to publish outcomes on a per-institution basis. However, it was <u>noted</u> too that to do so would have at least one desirable consequence in that it would provide institutions with clear incentives to boost performance in weaker areas. There would, however, in all likelihood be undesirable consequences also,

such as the development of league tables based on the outcomes and the risk that some institutions might use favourable outcomes for marketing purposes or even attempt to persuade students to submit positive feedback when completing the survey. Consideration was given to the proposal presented by Mr Kelly for indicating results nationally in graphical form.

6.   Report on the First-Year Student Experience Survey 2013/14

6.1   The response rate to this survey, at just over 20%, was <u>noted</u> as having been quite similar to the response rates to previous such surveys. The following outcomes were <u>noted</u> as being of particular interest:
- students generally have few difficulties in using electronic resources such as Moodle, but report feeling unprepared for academic writing and for tasks such as taking good notes and making presentations
- for the first time, the University's website has overtaken the undergraduate prospectus in terms of importance in informing decisions to apply
- social media do not feature prominently in the making of such decisions
- parents and guardians are very important in guiding such decisions.

6.2   The importance of tailoring orientation to specific class groups, with a view to fostering social interaction and a sense of identity with one's group, was <u>noted</u>. In this connection, it was <u>noted</u> that the experience of the UK is not always amenable to being mapped on to the Irish situation (for example, academic achievement in higher education in the UK correlates relatively strongly with prior academic achievement, whereas in Ireland the correlation with the suitability of one's chosen programme is stronger).

6.3   The financial costs of tailoring orientation programmes were <u>noted</u>, though it was also <u>noted</u> that such costs (and indeed many other types of cost) ensue when a student leaves the University prematurely having had a negative experience of it. The success of the BEST programme in DCU Business School was <u>noted</u>, as were the logistical challenges (for example, in terms of sourcing sufficient classroom space) associated with it and the difficulties these pose in terms of replicating this programme in other Faculties. It was suggested that a BEST-type programme might be integrated into lectures in the initial weeks of Semester 1; however, it was <u>noted</u> too that the experience of DCUBS indicates that holding it before the semester starts is a key factor in its success.

7.   Recommendations of the Working Group on Approval Procedures

7.1   The recommendations were <u>noted</u> as being aimed at ensuring adequate consideration of proposals for changes to existing programmes while also simplifying and streamlining procedures.

7.2   The recommendations were <u>approved</u> subject to the following:

- the form is to be renamed to reflect the fact that it will be used both for Faculty and for EC approval purposes
- the spaces for signatures at the end of the form are to be replaced by a space for just one (digital) signature, that of the Dean
- the Dean will be asked to sign not only on the basis that he/she is satisfied that all Faculty approval procedures have taken place but also on the basis that he/she is satisfied that the necessary resources exist in the Faculty to carry out the planned changes
- no external expert opinion is to be required in the case of proposed stand-alone modules
- the wording relating to the fourth line of the table on pages 1 and 3 of the form is to be revised with a view to avoiding possible misunderstandings
- optimum use of the words 'programme' and 'award' in the form are to be referred back to the Working Group for decision.

7.3   It was <u>agreed</u> that the form would be considered once more by the Working Group (with the recommendations at Item 7.2 above incorporated and with a view to obtaining the advice of the Working Group about wording in respect of 'programme' and 'award', as noted at Item 7.2) and would be made available for use from September 2014. A detailed standard operating procedure for the revised approval mechanisms will be drawn up, and stakeholders will be informed. The revised mechanisms will be reviewed for fitness for purpose at the end of the academic year 2014/15.

7.4   It was <u>agreed</u> that validation proposals would, from 2014/15, be accepted in each of the ten months in which the EC meets, rather than every second month as is currently the case. It was <u>agreed</u> too that the documentation for proposers of new programmes would be amended to include a page to be signed by the Dean of Faculty and submitted along with accreditation documentation to confirm that all validation recommendations have been met, as appropriate, prior to accreditation.

8.   Memorandum from GRSB with respect to MPhil as award title

   <u>Noted.</u>

9.   EC goals 2013/14

   It was <u>agreed</u> that, to boost participation in the SSOT (Survey of Student Opinion of Teaching) in the context of QuEST, a relatively large number of modestly-valued vouchers would be offered as possible prizes for respondents in the Semester 2 2013/14 iteration. The success or otherwise of this scheme will be reviewed in early 2015. Consideration will be given, in the medium term, to the introduction of other measures designed to boost participation. The importance of referring to the

SSOT as such, and not equating the entire QuEST process with it, was <u>noted</u>. It was <u>noted</u> that the information on QuEST would be placed on the web pages of the Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

10. Proposed extension of existing BA (Joint Honours)

<u>Approved.</u> <u>Agreed</u> that it would be very important to agree, and document, the exact titles of all awards and, in particular, to decide whether to have one overarching award title, i.e. 'Bachelor of Arts', or tailored titles such as 'Bachelor of Arts (Subject X and Subject Y)'. <u>Agreed</u> that, while the overarching programme learning outcomes were satisfactory in the context of the proposal documentation, it would be essential to write programme learning outcomes tailored to each possible subject combination.

11. Request for approval of proposed members of Accreditation Board: MA in Irish Studies

<u>Approved.</u>

12. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 7 May 2014, 2.00 p.m. in A204

Signed: _____   Date: _____
       Chair