

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 3 April 2014

9.00-10.50 a.m. in A204

Present: Mr Billy Kelly (Chair), Dr Brian Corcoran, Mr Eamon Costello, Professor Barbara Flood, Dr Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Ms Barbara McConalogue, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Enda McGlynn, Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Dr Caroline McMullan, Dr Pádraig Ó Duibhir, Ms Michele Pringle, Ms Annabella Stover, Dr Sheelagh Wickham

Apologies: Dr Mark Glynn, Dr Lisa Looney, Mr Ciarán O'Connor, Mr Ronan Tobin

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of two additional submissions under Item 4 and three submissions under Item 9.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 27 February 2014

The minutes were confirmed and were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Dr Nic Giolla Mhichíl noted that the inclusion of information about resit categories in programme regulations, which the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences had done in 2013/14, had proved very satisfactory because it had enhanced transparency of decision-making and provided opportunities for the provision of rationales for proposed changes. The Faculty will therefore be continuing this practice in 2014/15. (Item 3.5 of the meeting of 30 April 2013.)

- 3.2** Noted that the working group on external examiners would feature on the agenda of the meeting of 29 May 2014. (Item 3.2)
- 3.3** Noted, with respect to transitional arrangements for students on teacher education programmes who do not progress with their cohort but none the less must meet new Teaching Council requirements, that discussions had taken place between representatives of the Teaching Council, the IUA, the HEA and relevant higher education institutions. The importance of arriving at a resolution of the issues soon was noted. (Item 3.4)
- 3.4** Noted that the Working Group on Marks and Standards would meet shortly to formulate recommendations on relevant issues for consideration at the meeting of 29 May 2014. (See also Item 6.1 below.) (Item 3.5)
- 3.5** Noted that Ms Gillian Barry, Student Awards Manager in the Registry, had confirmed that details about the procedure for requesting additional repeat academic sessions in respect of students whose circumstances are exceptional would be included in the information made available to Programme Chairs prior to the meetings of the June 2014 Progression and Awards Boards. (Item 3.5)
- 3.6** Noted that recommendations about the management of examinations in remote locations would be discussed at the meeting of 29 May 2014. (Item 3.6)
- 3.7** With respect to *External examiners for taught programmes/modules: regulations and guidelines*, it was noted that the proposed new footnote would be submitted for approval by Academic Council at its meeting of 9 April 2014. (Item 3.7)
- 3.8** Noted that the legacy readmission form and procedure introduced in 2012/2013 would be the subject of review at the meeting of 11 September 2014. (Item 3.8)
- 3.9** Noted that a candidate readmitted on a legacy basis would surrender the parchment already presented to her. (Item 3.12)
- 3.10** Agreed that the issue of RPL would be included on the agenda of one of the meetings in the academic year 2014/15, when further information about the experience of Faculties in working with it would be to hand. (Item 3.14)
- 3.11** Noted that the policy on feedback and assessment would shortly be placed on the web page relating to the Office of the Deputy President/Dean of Teaching and Learning. (Item 3.15)

- 3.12** With respect to the management of records of (re-)accreditations of programmes by external professional bodies, and the sign-off of documentation, it was noted that consideration was being given to the implementation of best practice. (Item 3.16)
- 3.13** Noted that clarification had been obtained about what had appeared to be some duplication of responsibilities between two nominated external examiners, and both nominations had therefore been deemed approved. (Items 4.1.1 and 4.2.1)
- 3.14** Noted that a candidate readmitted on a legacy basis would surrender the parchment already presented to him. (Item 5.2.1)
- 3.15** Noted that discussions were ongoing in relation to the proposed revisions to the Memorandum of Understanding with Queen’s University Belfast about the MSc in Plasma and Vacuum Technology. (Item 6.1)

SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES

4.1 Appointment of external examiners

- 4.1.1 Professor Ciarán Connolly, Queen’s University Belfast
Modules in Accounting, Dublin City University Business School
Approved.
- 4.1.2 Mr Stephen Turkington, European Commission
Modules in Translation, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved.
- 4.1.3 Dr Kevin Curran, University of Ulster
Modules in IT, Oscail
Approved.
- 4.1.4 Professor Richard Lamming, Manchester Business School
MSc in Strategic Procurement
Approved.
- 4.1.5 Professor Paul Worsfold, Plymouth University
BSc in Environmental Science and Health
Approved.

4.2 Renewals/changes to duties of external examiners

None.

5. Other issues

5.1 Dublin City University Business School

5.1.1 Request for approval of PPR external experts: MSc in Electronic Commerce (Business)

The nomination of Professor William Dutton of the University of Oxford was approved. A nomination for a second external expert was not approved, on the grounds that it was considered sufficient to have one external expert for this PPR exercise and Professor Dutton's expertise appeared to be particularly appropriate for the purpose. It was noted that the new form and CV template for use in nominating PPR external experts (who are not serving external examiners) does not make provision for signature by the Head of School, but that such a signature would not be necessary to the extent that such forms and templates are approved by Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees before being submitted for the consideration of the USC. It was noted that, at a future date, consideration might be given to the inclusion of a request for a rationale as to why the serving external examiner was not being asked to undertake the PPR work.

5.2 Faculty of Engineering and Computing

5.2.1 Request for approval of PPR external expert: BSc in Computer Applications

The nomination of Dr Paul Gibson of Télécom SudParis was approved.

5.3 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

5.3.1 Request for readmission of a legacy candidate to the MSc in nGnó agus i dTeicneolaíocht an Eolais

Approved.

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)

6. Marks and Standards issues

6.1 Request for consideration of issue about resit categories

The issue relating to category 3, which had been raised by Ms Gillian Barry,

Student Awards Manager in the Registry, was noted as requiring resolution. The following were agreed:

- with respect to the current academic year, the 74 modules with respect to which category 3 was potentially a problem will be examined to determine the extent to which changes might be made to allow for resits in August 2014
- with respect to academic structures for 2014/15, which are shortly due for consideration by Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees, it may prove necessary to make changes to continuous assessment/examination weightings over the next few months; this can be accommodated by making relevant changes to the structures in September 2014
- the issues will be referred to the Working Group on Marks and Standards for further consideration. (See also Item 3.4 above.)

7. Proposal on derogation from English language requirements for postgraduate research students in two Faculties

7.1 In the course of the discussion about this proposal, the following points were made:

- it is very important to try, to the extent possible, to balance maintenance of standards with accessibility of the University to research students, as appropriate
- consideration might be given to making any changes that might be approved applicable in all Faculties, not just two Faculties
- consideration would need to be given to the opportunities available to students who ultimately fail to reach the required standard in English, in the event that the proposal were approved
- a foundation programme, pre registration, would be helpful as a means of resolving the issues, but would be likely to lead to serious funding difficulties for students (e.g. where a funding body requires that a student be registered on a research programme *per se* before it will make funding available)
- the numbers of research applicants who do not meet the current English language requirements, and whose situation gave rise to the proposal, is not so large that a pilot programme (incorporating the proposed derogation) would be feasible
- it would be very difficult to get information from other institutions about the outcomes of any derogations from their own English language requirements that they might have implemented.

7.2 It was agreed that the issues would be discussed further by the Chair, Dr McGlynn and the other Associate Deans for Research, Dr Looney and Ms McMorrow and that the discussion would encompass all the operational issues that would arise for the Registry in the event of the derogation ultimately being approved.

8. Draft guidelines for dissertations/projects

- 8.1** The draft guidelines were noted as being welcome and likely to prove very useful, particularly with respect to programmes for which no guidelines are currently available.
- 8.2** It was agreed to make amendments to the draft to take account of the following: the need to make it clear that the provision of feedback on draft work does not equate to the making of predictions about the likely mark to be awarded; the need to provide appropriate flexibility in terms of confirmation between student and supervisor that meetings have taken place and outcomes have been agreed; the importance of resolving any problematic issues at local level, as appropriate, and avoiding unnecessary escalation. It was agreed also to delete the sentence following the reference to proofreading drafts for grammatical and spelling mistakes.
- 8.3** It was agreed that the members of the USC would provide further feedback, if available, to Dr Wickham by 7 April 2014 with a view to facilitating discussion of the draft guidelines in Faculties. The guidelines will then be resubmitted for the consideration of the USC (ideally on an electronic basis in early May 2014).

9. Any other business

- 9.1** Noted that, while the practice, at or prior to Progression and Awards Boards, of rounding a module mark of 39% up to 40% was widespread in the University, it was not in use in all Faculties. (Noted in this connection that the pass mark in some programmes is 50%, and that therefore the issue here is rounding, or not, of 49% to 50%.) Agreed that it was not within the remit of the USC to make specific recommendations to PABs as to the kinds of decisions they should make in this context. Agreed also, however, that equity of treatment of students was very important and that a recommendation that such equity be practised as appropriate would be made to the PAB Working Group with a view to bringing the matter to the attention of the Vice-President Academic Affairs (Registrar), to whom the outcome of the Working Group's deliberations would be made known.
- 9.2** Noted that a revised EE2 form would be required from the beginning of the academic year 2014/15, to cater for changes to external examiners' duties only, since renewal of appointment would no longer be possible. The EE2 form will therefore be revised in due course.

- 9.3 Noted that the agenda for the 29 May 2014 meeting of the USC, the last of the academic year, was likely to be a long one.

Date of next meeting:

**29 May 2014
9.00 a.m. in A204**

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____