

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

4 June 2024

2.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

Present:

P. Admirand	L. Boran	A. Brennan
J. Bruton	D. Burke	A. Butler
P. Clarke	Y. Crotty	B. Daly
J. Doyle	J. Doyle	M. Efthymiou
D. Elliott	D. Fahy	Y. Freeney
F. Gallagher	P. Gallagher	T. Gans
C. Gurrin	D. Hand	B. Hayes
A. Intizar	R. Keegan	D. Kinahan
A. Kirwan	V. Lambert	L. Looney (Chair)
J. Lynch	C. Mac an Bhaird	U. McCabe
A. McCarren	K. McDonagh	P. McMorro
P. Mooney	JP. Mosnier	N. Murphy
P. Murphy	W. Murphy	T. Ní Mhuirthile
K. Nolan	M. O'Brien	S. O'Brien
N. O'Sullivan	M. Pryce	A. Sinnott
T. Szecsi	G. Uí Laighléis	A. Whelan (Secretary)
B. White		

Apologies:

E. Clinton	S. Cullen	G. French
D. Keogh	J. McDonough	J. McMackin
R. McManus	S. O'Brien	M. Ward
P. Young		

In Attendance:

E. Crossen (for Item 10)	G. Curran
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Professor Lisa Looney, Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar, chaired this meeting of Academic Council in the absence of Professor Dáire Keogh, President, who was travelling on university business.

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted as circulated, bar the deferral of item 19.

A. Minutes and related issues

2. Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 3 April 2024

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising

It was noted that there were no matters arising.

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 20 March 2024, 17 April 2024, 15 May 2024 and minutes of the meeting of Education Committee Standing Committee of 21 May 2024

The minutes were approved.

5. Minutes of the meeting of the University Standards Committee of 11 April 2024 and 16 May 2024

The minutes were approved.

6. Minutes of the meetings of the Graduate Research Studies Board of 28 March 2024 and 25 April 2024

The minutes were approved.

B. Policy and strategy issues

7. President's report (oral report)

There was no President's report.

8. Procedure for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Sanction

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar introduced this item, noting that the procedure was revised following the approval of the updated Academic Integrity Policy by Academic Council at its meeting on 6 June 2023. The procedure was reviewed by a sub-committee of University Standards Committee, chaired by the Dean of Teaching and Learning.

The Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning of the Faculty of Science and Health spoke to this item in the absence of the Dean of Teaching and Learning. She outlined that the aim of the revised procedure is to help foster a culture of academic integrity within the University and to align university processes with the guidance and advice contained within the National Academic Integrity Network's (NAIN) Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management, which was published in 2023. The updated procedure provides guidance for academic staff and greater clarity for students.

The most notable change that has been made is the introduction of a tariff system for cases of academic misconduct, in which points are allocated according to four defined categories. The combined score of the four categories is used to determine the appropriate level of academic misconduct that has occurred and what sanction may be applied. Depending on the severity of the case and the level of academic misconduct that is determined, the case may be referred to the University Disciplinary Committee. The tariff system is based on the NAIN Framework for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Case Management but has been adapted to align with processes already in place within the University. It was noted that the procedure would be reviewed one year after implementation.

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar welcomed the updates made to the procedure, particularly the categories within the tariff system which allows a differentiation of scoring dependent on assessment weighting and year of study, among the four categories. She acknowledged that the tariff system had been modelled and tested by the sub-committee and confirmed that the revised procedure will be in place for the 2024/25 academic year.

Approved

9. Student Feedback on Teaching

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar noted that items 9, 10 and 11 on the agenda have been progressed in response to recommendations made in the 2019 CINNTE report, and also as part of the University's commitment to 'Pioneer a Transformative Student Experience' as outlined in the DCU Strategy 2023-2028. The CINNTE recommendations relate to assessment and feedback, student feedback on teaching, and the provision of threshold expectations to students regarding their academic experience. It was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic impacted heavily on the timeliness of the response to the CINNTE report recommendations.

The Executive Dean of DCU Business School, who chaired the working group on Student Feedback on Teaching, spoke to this item. The working group was formed by Education Committee. It was noted that engagement with the Students' Union was integral to ensure that a 'student first' approach was employed by the working group. The Executive Dean of DCU Business School outlined that the aim of the working group was to create a process that would close the feedback loop for students and to help create a culture of feedback within the University. He highlighted that good feedback from students can assist with providing an enriched student experience.

It was noted that there are a number of models used to close the feedback loop by other Higher Education Institutions, however the University ought to curate a model(s) suited to

the DCU culture and processes. Engagement with student representatives should continue throughout this design stage.

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar noted that models for the provision of feedback to students will need to be considered by Programme Boards during the next academic year. She also signalled that module level feedback will be sought from students via student feedback surveys. Based on the recommendation of the working group these surveys will consider each module on a cyclical basis at minimum every three years however Faculties will have some flexibility to tailor the suite of modules to be included in the surveys. It was noted that a review of the mechanism and platform utilised for collecting this feedback, and the approach to analysis and dissemination would be undertaken in due course.

Approved

10. Threshold Expectations of Academic Experience

Mr Eoin Crossen, former Students' Union Vice-President for Academic Life, joined the meeting for this item.

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar introduced this item, re-stating the context of a CINNTE recommendation, in this instance that the university make clear what consistent minimum standard of academic experience is expected. With the support of the new student representative, she had invited the former Students' Union Vice-President for Academic Life to speak to this item as he had worked on these statements with DCU colleagues and helped steer them through Education Committee.

The former Students' Union Vice-President for Academic Life noted how this item aligns with the strategic priority of providing a transformative student experience. He outlined that the vast majority of academics are already providing this minimum standard to students, however the threshold of what is expected is not currently outlined in any documentation. Attention was drawn to the seven principles of threshold expectations which focus on ensuring that students are provided with:

- Support to plan;
- Support to manage workload;
- The opportunity and mechanisms to provide formal feedback on learning;
- The opportunity for timely contact with academic staff;
- A learning environment conducive to academic success;
- Support to achieve learning outcomes;
- Assessment guidance and feedback.

The former Students' Union Vice-President for Academic Life noted that the focus of these threshold expectations is academic, and these expectations will need to be encompassed within the Student Charter or sit parallel to the Charter. The threshold expectations will be in place for the 2024-25 academic year.

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar noted that the Student Support and Development Unit plan on reviewing the Student Charter and may encompass the threshold expectations within it, or have them sit alongside it. She noted that there is an expectation that students to play their part and engage with information and academic supports

provided to them. She also noted that these expectations statements should be signalled to new academic staff members during their orientation.

Approved

Mr Eoin Crossen, former Students' Union Vice-President for Academic Life, left the meeting after this item.

11. Assessment and Feedback in the Support of Student Learning Policies

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar noted that the Assessment and Feedback in the Support of Student Learning Policies, as presented to Academic Council, include some revisions, however it is planned that a more in-depth review of both policies will be undertaken. The current revision of the policies has resulted in two primary changes. The first of these is the inclusion of a defined timeline for the provision of feedback to students, fifteen working days after submission of an assessment. The implementation of a defined timeline for the provision of assessment feedback to students was included as a recommendation to be addressed by the 2019 CINNTE Reports. The second is a revised definition of assessment to include three sequential components: gathering evidence, evaluation of this evidence against criteria or outcomes, and provision of feedback based on this evaluation. Both of these changes will bring the policies more in line with sectoral norms.

Approved

C. Items for formal approval/noting

12. Accreditation Report: MA in Music, Sound, Culture and Media

Approved

13. Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis

Approved

14. Regulations and Guidelines: External Examiners for Taught Programmes and Modules

Approved

15. Marks and Standards 2024-25

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar drew attention to the comment in the memo that due to Banner implementation some modification to Marks and Standards may need to be considered during the 2024-25 academic year. Changes could be confined to the

adoption, where relevant, of new terminology contained within Marks and Standards, driven in part by new functionality within Banner.

Approved

16. Regulations to Support Legacy Readmission Decisions

Approved

17. Examination and Progression and Award Boards Report, Summer 2024

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs / Registrar recognised the tremendous volume of work that has been completed by colleagues across the University to enable the release of examination results to students. She noted that guidelines for staff and students regarding consultation days had recently been circulated.

Approved

18. QQI Proposed Convention on the Titling of Minor, Special Purpose, and Supplemental Classes of Awards

Approved

19. DCU Placement Report 2022-23

This item was deferred to the October 2024 meeting of Academic Council.

20. Any other business

There was no other business.

Date of next meeting:

<p style="text-align: center;">2 October 2024</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2:00 pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AG01, Glasnevin Campus</p>
