EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Wednesday, 15 May 2024

2.00 p.m. – 4.15 p.m.

H206, Glasnevin Campus

Present: Dr Claire Bohan, Mr Eoin Crossen, Professor Dominic Elliott, Professor Derek
                        Hand, Dr Rachel Keegan, Professor Anne Looney, Professor Lisa Looney (Chair),
                        Dr Jennifer McManis, Ms Pauline Mooney, Professor Sharon O'Brien, Dr Monica
                        Ward and Professor Blánaid White, Dr Paul Young

Apologies: Professor Mark Brown, Dr Jennifer Bruton, Professor John Doyle, Ms Margaret
                        Irwin-Bannon and

In attendance: Dr Jing Burgi-Tian and Dr David Mc Carthy (Secretary)

The Chair expressed her thanks to Mr Eoin Crossen for his contribution to Education Committee
throughout his time as DCU Students' Union Vice-President for Academic Life which ends this
month. Mr Crossen's positive impact on academic affairs and involvement in a wide variety of
projects relating to the business of the Committee was noted.

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1.   Adoption of the agenda

         The agenda was adopted.

2.   Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee of 17 April 2024

The minutes of the meeting of 17 April 2024 were <u>approved</u> and signed by the Chair.

3.   Matters arising from the minutes of 17 April 2024

3.1   Dr Rachel Keegan, the Director of Quality and Institutional Insights, provided an update on the dissemination of data from the DCU Staff Survey on Artificial Intelligence, confirming that the full version of the report will be shared with Senior Management, while a high-level version of the report will be made available to staff in the coming weeks. Access to open text questions and certain filters will be removed from the high-level report. Dr Keegan will liaise with the Executive Deans to determine the most suitable fora for sharing the dashboard with specific faculty staff.

The Chair reminded members that Education Committee instigated the survey to establish a baseline of staff's awareness and use of AI. All faculties are expected to review their portfolio of programmes and report to the Committee on the nature of changes they expect will be required in light of the opportunities and challenges posed by this emerging technology on teaching, learning and assessment and their disciplines.

Professor Blánaid White, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science and Health, informed the Committee about the approach taken by the Faculty regarding Generative AI. The Faculty Management Board decided that all discipline areas should have a toolkit to enable discussions about Generative AI, and so a series of workshops had been organised. In parallel, a subcommittee of the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee was established to consider its impact on literature reviews, final year projects on undergraduate programmes and dissertations on taught postgraduate programmes. The subcommittee developed a set of discipline agnostic guidelines for module coordinators and supervisors.

The Chair acknowledged the progress being made by the Faculty of Science and Health regarding knowledge of Generative AI and its impact and emphasised the importance of similar actions and conversations being had across all faculties. Professor White agreed to share the guidelines with the Committee through the Secretary.

3.2   It was <u>noted</u> that the proposal of the Student Feedback on Teaching Working Group is on the agenda of this meeting (Item. 4.2).

3.3   It was <u>noted</u> that the Education Committee Standing Committee will meet on 21 May 2024 to consider the Revised Academic Offering for the MA in Gender Studies.

3.4   It was <u>noted</u> that the Revised Academic Offering document for the MSc in Management (Insight & Innovation) was revised to indicate that the Graduate Diploma in Management (Insights and Innovation) is a major award.

3.5   It was <u>noted</u> that DCU's return to the QQI Classifications Project was submitted by the Academic Secretary.

3.6   It was <u>noted</u> that the final consideration of how the accreditation process for the DCU Futures programmes will be completed will take place in Autumn 2024 (Item 5.1).

3.7   It was <u>noted</u> that the matter of the design and use of teaching spaces is ongoing.

3.8   It was <u>noted</u> that Education Committee is awaiting confirmation as to whether the MA in Refugee Integration will be delivered full-time in September 2025 and, if so, consideration is to be given to the online student experience. Institutional guidance will also be required in this regard at a later date.

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS

4.   Strategic academic initiatives

4.1   Assessment and Feedback in Teaching and Learning Policies

Dr Monica Ward, the Dean of Teaching and Learning, set out the context for revising the Assessment and the Feedback in Support of Student Learning Policies, explaining that the 'Threshold standards for delivery of Teaching and Learning' approved by Education Committee on 17 April 2024 necessitates specific changes to the policies for implementation in the 2024/25 academic year.

It was noted that a more thorough review of the policies is required in the medium term. Mr Eoin Crossen, DCU Students' Union Vice-President for Academic Life, reiterated the importance that building a culture of feedback at DCU informs any thorough review of these policies.

Dr Ward informed the Committee that the primary change to the policies is the specification of a timeframe for providing feedback to students, which is cognisant of the need for timeliness but also the workload of lecturers. Dr Ward explained that the timeframe benchmarked against sectoral norm ranges from 15-20 working days.

Following discussion by the Committee, it was agreed that a 15 working day timeframe should be specified, with the expectation that staff inform students when this timeline cannot be met, and that clarification should be provided confirming what assessments this timeframe applies to.

The revised Assessment and the Feedback in Support of Student Learning Policies were **approved** subject to the following amendments being made:

- The working day timeframe for providing feedback to students be set to 15 working days.
- Confirm that the timeframe applies to assessments submitted during the semester and that feedback on assessments submitted at the very end of semester or during the examination period come under the arrangements in place for consultation days.
- Replace "he/she" and "him/her" with "they" and "them" respectively.
- Include the statement from 'Threshold standards for delivery of Teaching and Learning' that students will be supported to learn how to receive and apply feedback in 'Feedback to Support Student Learning Policy'.
- Provide a definition of assessment, which includes the three sequential components of assessment: gathering evidence, evaluation of this evidence against criteria or outcomes, and provision of feedback based on this evaluation.

It was noted that, once the above amendments have been made, the revised policies will be submitted to Academic Council for approval.

4.2   Student Feedback on Teaching Working Group Proposal

As Chair of the Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) Working Group, Professor Dominic Elliott explained that the proposal recommends that the University prioritise closing the feedback loop and utilise existing mechanisms for obtaining student feedback on teaching.

Professor Elliott emphasised the importance of placing the student at the centre of the process. Mr Crossen reiterated the importance of prioritising closing the feedback loop and not losing sight of the larger aim of establishing a culture of feedback across the University.

Professor Elliott set out the primary recommendations of the SFT Working Group, in particular that the University co-design a student feedback loop with DCU Students' Union and develop a portfolio of three to four models for closing the feedback loop that utilise the existing academic QA governance structures of the University; adopt a cyclical approach to module evaluation surveys, which would require each individual module on a programme to be surveyed once every three years at a minimum; and redesign the module-level feedback instrument so that it is easier and quicker to complete and captures feedback that is meaningful to and actionable by faculty.

Dr Jing Burgi-Tian, Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, welcomed the proposal that individual faculties should be responsible for reviewing student feedback data and taking appropriate actions. However, she raised a number of queries regarding the implementation of the proposal that should be considered when designing the university-wide approach to student feedback, calling particular attention to ownership of the data, providing access to colleagues who have a genuine need for the data, and the suitability of the current platform to support the analysis of and sharing a large number of reports on the data. Dr Burgi-Tian reiterated that the Quality and Institutional Insights Office has the expertise and systems in place to analyse the data and disseminate reports to the relevant stakeholders in a convenient and confidential manner, and spoke to the value of connecting such data to other data trends across the University.

Ms Pauline Mooney, Academic Secretary, reminded the Committee that the Terms of Reference for the SFT Working Group established its remit to make recommendations to Education Committee regarding a university-wide approach to student feedback at the module level and closing the feedback loop rather than developing a new student feedback

system. Ms Mooney reiterated the importance of communicating to Academic Council that the proposal establishes the foundations for a university-wide approach to student feedback and does not preclude further developments toward a new student feedback system.

The Chair informed the Committee that the proposal would benefit from being contextualised before it is submitted to Academic Council, framed as an initial stage when the existing platform will be used while work is focused on developing feedback models and considering the matters raised by Dr Burgi-Tian. Because of the need for timeliness, the Chair also queried whether the Annual Programme Review is the correct mechanism for reporting on student feedback data and the actions taken in response to analysis of this data.

The Chair confirmed that definitions of ownership of data collected by the university will be considered as part of a larger data governance project and should not be stipulated in the proposal. Professor Anne Looney, Executive Dean of DCU Institute of Education, explained that the issue is not ownership of the data but rather ensuring there is appropriate access to the data. Professor Looney suggested that a more nuanced approach should be adopted than in the draft proposal, ensuring that the data is made available to those individuals who are best positioned to consider, respond to and act upon this data.

The Chair welcomed the proposal and reiterated the importance of adopting a university-wide approach to student feedback based on best practices in the sector. The SFT Working Group proposal was **approved** in principle and a document based on it will be submitted to Academic Council which will include the following amendments and clarifications:

- Confirming that the adoption of a cyclical approach to module evaluation surveys and developing a student feedback loop are the initial stages in a phased approach to establishing a university-wide student feedback system.
- Acknowledging that while each module would initially be surveyed at least once in a three-year cycle, the frequency of surveys could change as different stages in the development of a university-wide approach to student feedback progress.
- Removing references to ownership of data and including a generic statement on access to the data.
- A method of reporting on student feedback and responses that is timely will be developed.

- Including a reference to Heads of School in their capacity as line managers of faculty.
- Involving the Quality and Institutional Insights Office in future planning.
- Indicating the need for additional resources to support the subsequent stages in the development and implementation of a university-wide student feedback system.

The Chair reiterated that DCU needs to demonstrate to students how their feedback has been considered, responded to and actioned at the local level, while also considering how a university-wide approach to student feedback on teaching can be developed upon over the next few years.

The Chair thanked the SFT Working Group for its work in developing the proposal and informed the Committee that this concludes its term as the specific task assigned to it is now complete.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME AND MODULE-SPECIFIC MATTERS

5.   DCU Business School

5.1   Withdrawn from the agenda.

SECTION D: OTHER MATTERS

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

The Chair set out the context of QQI's 'Proposed Convention on the Titling of Minor, Special-Purpose, and Supplemental Classes of Awards' and informed the Committee that University Standards Committee endorsed the convention at its meeting on 11 April 2024 (USC2024/A3/7).

Education Committee **approved** confirming to QQI that the University:

     i.   agrees to abide by the proposed titling convention for minor, special-purpose and supplemental award classes.

    ii.   supports regulating the titling of minor, special-purpose and supplemental classes of awards through a formal NFQ determination.

   iii.   agrees that usage of the term 'professional' and cognate terms in NFQ award stems to qualifications should be protected and limited to well-defined professions.

It was noted that DCU elects to continue to use 'graduate' instead of 'postgraduate' for level 9 Certificate and Diploma awards. The Chair acknowledged that there is some inconsistency in the use of the term 'professional' in NFQ award stems in the sector. It was noted that DCU will continue to only use this term for qualifications in the context of registration and/or regulatory requirements.

The Chair informed the Committee that QQI is gathering returns from all HE providers and will determine if a specific position or sectoral standard is required to ensure national standardisation of award titles across the sector. The decision of the Committee regarding QQI's 'Proposed Convention on the Titling of Minor, Special-Purpose, and Supplemental Classes of Awards' will be submitted to Academic Council for approval.

7.   Faculty APR Reports

7.1   *DCU Business School*

The APR Report for DCU Business School for the 2022/23 academic year was noted.

Professor Elliott, Executive Dean of DCU Business School, called particular attention to the need for more dedicated spaces to facilitate the delivery of active learning.

7.2   *DCU Institute of Education*

The APR Report for DCU Institute of Education for the 2022/23 academic year was noted.

Professor Anne Looney called particular attention to the ongoing revisions to particular programmes due to changes in the primary education curriculum, the efforts to make

students familiar with AI as a tool to support teaching and learning and the positive impact of reaccreditation by the Teaching Council as it necessitated a thorough review of assessment practices across all education programmes.

7.3   Faculty of Engineering and Computing

The APR Report for the Faculty of Engineering and Computing for the 2022/23 academic year was <u>noted</u>.

Dr Jennifer McManis, Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, called particular attention to Generative AI as an emerging issue when assessing students and also the need for sufficient supports to manage international students on the MSc programmes.

The Chair acknowledged that staff are concerned about ensuring equity of access to AI software and securing appropriate licences, and emphasised the importance of adopting a coherent approach across the University rather than faculties adopting individual approaches that meet local circumstances and requirements.

7.4   Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

The APR Report for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for the 2022/23 academic year was <u>noted</u>.

Professor Derek Hand, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, called particular attention to the changes in the BA Joint Honours curriculum and how management of the programme will now involve a team of three people rather than an individual Programme Chair, with each Deputy Chair having responsibility for one year group, and noted the absence of student representatives at many Programme Boards as an ongoing concern.

7.5   Faculty of Science and Health

The APR Report for the Faculty of Science and Health for the 2022/23 academic year was <u>noted</u>.

Professor White called particular attention to the fact that this is the first cycle of Annual Programme Reviews to include the DCU Futures pathways; the phasing out of prescribed evidence as an assessment process in practice modules following NMBI review of undergraduate nursing programmes; and the change underway as the BSc Physical Education with Biology/Mathematics transition to a new programme structure in response to Teaching Council requirements, reducing from 270 ECTS to 240 ECTS.

It was noted that student attendance continued to feature in some Annual Programme Reviews during the 2022/23 academic year. Mr Eoin Crossen reiterated the importance that the value-added by on-campus teaching activities and how these lead to improved engagement in learning must be real and communicated to students.

The Chair acknowledged that commentary on the academic calendar continues to feature in discussions at the faculty level, noting that this is despite the fact that time for grading outside teaching time has not shortened. It was agreed that other factors may be contributing such as the increase in student numbers, assessment design, or over-assessment. It was noted that a conversation would be welcome at the appropriate time, which could allow for consideration of those dimensions, in the context of our academic calendar. This links to the point made earlier in the meeting about the need to revisit assessment at a university level.

8.   Any other business

There were no items of other business.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday, 18 September 2024
at 2.00 pm
Room AG01, Glasnevin Campus