EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Wednesday, 13 November 2024

2.00 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.

Room G401, St Patrick's Campus

Present: Dr Claire Bohan, Dr Jennifer Bruton, Ms Aoife Butler, Professor Dominic Elliott, Professor Derek Hand, Dr Rachel Keegan, Professor Anne Looney, Professor Lisa Looney (Chair), Dr Ruth McManus, Dr Monica Ward, and Professor Blánaid White

Apologies: Professor Mark Brown, Professor John Doyle, Dr David Mc Carthy, Ms Pauline Mooney, Professor Sharon O'Brien, and Dr Paul Young

In attendance: Ms Goretti Daughton (Secretary) and Dr Jing Burgi-Tian

The Chair welcomed Ms Goretti Daughton, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance, who is acting as Secretary to the Committee in the absence of Dr David Mc Carthy.

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 9 October 2024

The minutes of the meeting of Education Committee of 9 October 2024 were **approved** and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of 9 October 2024

3.1 The Completion of the Accreditation Cycle: DCU Futures is on the Agenda (Item 8).

3.2 Exam Results Analysis

It was noted that, in general, results have returned to pre-Covid levels of student attainment.

The Executive Deans were asked to provide brief verbal updates on what analysis of the data of Assessment Results at faculty level reveals and the actions that will be taken to address any local trends of significance.

Professor Blánaid White reported on programmes in the Faculty of Science & Health, which were reviewed on a school basis.

School of Chemical Sciences and School of Biotechnology: an increased number of first year undergraduate students are passing year 1 but there has been an increase in the number of students being awarded H3s rather than higher grades, and an increase in failure rates in year 2. Time and focus on year 1 progression is clearly having a positive impact, but students may be challenged by the more traditional format of closed book examination assessment in year 2. The focus will be on broadening efforts so that the schools can support students to pass both Year 1 and Year 2 successfully.

School of Physical Sciences: The biggest change has been in Year 3 where more than half of the undergraduate students were awarded H3s. Students take specialisms in Year 3 and it is being investigated what might have impacted on the lower performance of students compared with Year 1 and Year 2.

School of Mathematical Sciences: Up to 25% of Year 2 students failed in Summer 2024 and the number of students being awarded H1s and H2s was the lowest ever documented. This outcome will be investigated by the programme staff with a view to supporting students to achieve better outcomes in 2024-25.

School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health: the results were untypical and presented a significant change from previous years. The impact of a change from specific marks to pass/fail grades for practice modules resulted in fewer students being awarded a

H1 and a greater number of students being awarded a H2. It was noted that this change was highlighted in the case study on the BSc in General Nursing that was included in DCU's submission for the QQI Classification Project, which indicated that this change would have an impact on grade attainment in the case of nursing programmes.

The faculty reviewed results for students who came via the Further Education and Training (FET) and Access routes. It was identified that Access students were performing on par with their peers and in the case of Chemistry were outperforming their peers. None of the Access students failed Mathematics or Physics modules.

It was reported that there was a higher than average failure rate in the case of students who came via the FET route taking Biotechnology modules. The Faculty Teaching Committee will analyse the data and discuss potential contributing factors with a view to identifying appropriate measures to support the students concerned.

Professor Anne Looney reported that an analysis of the data of Exam Results at faculty level is on the agenda for the meeting of DCU Institute of Education' Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee, which is taking place tomorrow. A review, considering the volume and nature of assessment, is underway within the Faculty.

Overall, results have largely returned to pre-Covid norms in programmes in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS). It was noted that the nature of assessment has changed since pre-Covid with more modules including or relying fully on coursework. The Faculty's Programme Board meetings are underway this week and insights and analysis will be considered by the Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee in due course. FET students enrolled on FHSS programmes are performing at the upper end of norms, whereas grades for Access and mature students have declined. It is proposed to add an additional orientation mid-semester to provide guidance for these student cohorts as a supplement to the information presented to them in September.

Dr Jennifer Bruton reported that in the case of students registered on programmes in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, there is ongoing concern about first year undergraduate failure rates, particularly on the Computer Science and Data Science programmes. The School of Computing is reviewing the mathematics provision on these programmes to ensure coherence with learning outcomes. In the case of Engineering undergraduate programmes, progression rates are very good from first to second year but there is concern about progression rates for second year students which might indicate that

the curriculum and assessment in first year is not fully supporting students for the challenges of second year content. A review is underway to better support students to be successful across both years.

The Faculty has also reviewed the degree awards and it is acknowledged that some degree programmes have a higher than average number of H1 awards, e.g. Data Science graduates disproportionately appear on the Dean's List. This may reflect the nature of those cohorts. A review of the performance of FET students on Computing degrees identified that while overall precision marks gave some concern in 2022-23, there is no evidence of a similar trend in 2023-24.

The point was raised that, in order to review and analyse results for students pursuing integrated master's programmes, it will be necessary to make available data for 5, rather than 4 years of study.

Professor Dominic Elliott advised that the Programme Boards in DCU Business School are underway and the analysis and insights will be available in due course.

Dr Monica Ward noted that there is evidence from Student Support and Development that FET students availed of significant levels of support in the 2023-24 academic year, which may be reflected in the performance and the progression of the students concerned.

Professor Looney noted that there is some indication that FET students had a standard rate of progression but with a lower precision mark than average. The report that is in preparation relating to deepening our engagement with FET will be available in due course, but it is evident that there is a gap in FET student progression that needs to be further analysed.

The Chair noted that work underway by colleagues in the Quality and Institutional Insights Office (QIO) in relation to the impact of changes to assessment mix may inform considerations of student performance. Dr Jing Burgi-Tian advised that it is possible to replicate the study and analysis in relation to postgraduate taught programmes, particularly for large student cohorts. The dashboards were acknowledged to be very helpful in contextualising the discussions.

3.3 The Chair confirmed that a list of programmes approved to be delivered predominantly online has been shared with QIO with a view to forming a comprehensive list. Dr Burgi-Tian will share the list with Dr Claire Bohan.

3.4 The terms of reference for the Working Group on the Design and Use of Teaching Spaces were finalised as discussed at the previous meeting of Education Committee and have been shared with relevant stakeholders. The Chair informed the Committee that Dr Bruton has agreed to act as Chair of the Working Group for its first phase, which will focus on policies and procedures relating to the use of general access computing facilities for the purpose of conducting computer-based examinations.

3.5 The revised documentation for the Revised Academic Offering for MSc in Finance was submitted to the Secretary and is currently being reviewed.

3.6 The Chair is preparing an overview of achievements relating to the Teaching and Learning Strategy, which will be presented at the December meeting of Education Committee.

4. Minutes of the Strategic Learning Innovation Project (SLIP) Steering Group

The Minutes of the Strategic Learning Innovation Project (SLIP) Steering Group Meetings of 15 May 2024 and 8 October 2024 were noted.

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS

5. Strategic academic initiatives

5.1 *Review of Curriculum in the Context of Artificial Intelligence*

The shared paper submitted by Faculties on the likely impact of AI on curriculum was the context for a wide-ranging discussion on the impact of AI. While departing somewhat from the format envisaged, the review reported on in the paper was acknowledged to have been a useful exercise to identify where the pockets of expertise and gaps in knowledge with respect to Generative AI (GenAI) are in the University. It was also recognised that it represents a starting point for a larger effort to demystify Gen AI, organically build

communities of practice and embed AI in curriculum design and delivery. The rate and constant presence of change was raised.

It was commented upon that while issues regarding the implications of GenAI for assessment are substantially being addressed within DCU Institute of Education, there has been limited adoption in relation to other aspects of curriculum delivery.

Dr Bruton reported that in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, there are discussions underway concerning the difference between AI and GenAI and how the latter presents specific challenges in relation to assessment. She acknowledged that graduates need to have a foundation in relation to the ethics of AI and GenAI and there are also issues in relation to Intellectual Property (IP) that need to be understood. Furthermore, students need knowledge of fundamentals of their disciplines to enable them to harness the functionality afforded by GenAI, as these will not change, while the tools used will. There is a concern that access or lack of access to such tools could create an inequitable playing field for students.

Professor White informed the Committee that the Jisc 'AI Maturity Model for Tertiary Education' has been a helpful resource for colleagues to understand the fears and uncertainties they experience with respect to GenAI.

The Chair acknowledged that the Review is a rich resource for the University as it documents examples of 'early adopter' practice in DCU. However, she also recognised that a more critical perspective of the impact of AI on curriculum is required. Without this, it is challenging to identify where the University should have concerns and where attention is required, in particular where Schools and or Programmes are not looking at GenAI in the context of teaching and learning and not just assessment. It was agreed that implicit in the report is that, at this point, Faculties have not identified any programme or specialism that should be retired or introduced in light of the expected impact of AI, and the focus generally is on modifications to module content and tools. While the Report is a useful resource, it should be accompanied by a critical interpretation of the status of our response to the opportunities and challenges of AI in the round.

It was noted that the Review does not document the impact of exposure to GenAI tools that our students experience when they are in INTRA placement and it also does not reflect the predicted epidemic / societal impact of GenAI addition, a likely impact in human behaviour and health. It will be necessary to have a form of words prepared in advance of the DCU

Open Days to address queries from students and Careers Guidance Teachers for whom this is a compelling topic.

Dr Rahel Keegan advised that the 2024 Quality Improvement & Development (QuID) Funding Scheme had Artificial Intelligence as its theme. Dr Keegan informed the Committee that there will be a showcase in December involving recipients of 2024 QUID funding, who will share insights and outcomes of their AI-focused projects.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME AND MODULE-SPECIFIC MATTERS

6. Faculty of Science and Health

6.1 **Delivery of Professional Doctorate in Elite Performance (Sport) for remote students**

A memo was presented which outlined provision for delivery of the DELITE programme for remote students across both the taught and substantive research phase of the programme. When originally accredited, it had been flagged that the programme would attract professionals who were in full time employment world-wide. However, 'Principles for Quality Assurance of DCU E-learning and Blended Provision' were not in place at the time. In addition, the misalignment of the expectation of blended remote students as a 'norm' with the timing and format of the 'Permission to Reside / Carry Out Research Abroad' process for research students had not been explored.

Details of the alignment of taught elements of the programme with the Principles document were noted and welcomed, as was the required presence of students on campus at key stages. It was accepted that, in this instance, the rationale for registration in DCU for a student based abroad (rather than locally) is explained by the type of students, and their typical employment which is integral to their undertaking of a professional doctorate. It was emphasised that, in common with all research students, appropriate arrangements for supervision and oversight of the field, experimental or other work need to be in place and appropriately documented. Much of this is included in the memo provided.

It was also raised that it is necessary to retain a record of which students are resident abroad while pursuing their research studies in DCU. The Committee acknowledged that the PGR13 process is not best suited to the case of students applying for or on the DELITE programme. It was agreed that the Faculty of Science and Health will engage with the Dean of Graduate

Studies and colleagues in Registry to identify an appropriate mechanism to approve and record the situation of DELITE students studying from abroad.

Professor Looney noted that there are international students registered on the Doctor of Education (EdD) programme also and, depending on what arrangements are agreed in the case of DELITE students, this may impact on the EdD also.

6.2 *Amendments to Validation Proposal for MSc in Physiotherapy (Pre-Registration)*

Proposed amendments to the Validation Proposal for the MSc in Physiotherapy (Pre-Registration), which was originally approved by Education Committee at its meeting of 15 November 2023 and subsequently approved by Academic Council on 29 November 2023, were discussed. It has been identified that two amendments are necessary as follows:

(i) Increase in clinical placement ECTS, resulting in an increase in programme ECTS credit value to 180 ECTS;
(ii) A change in membership of the proposed accreditation board.

The programme was originally approved with a total of 120 credits, included clinical placement but with no ECTS associated with placement. The assignment of ECTS to placement is essential for professional recognition by CORU, the health and social care professions regulator in Ireland and by international credentialling bodies. Students will complete a Clinical Education module at the end of Year 1 and Year 2. These modules represent 1,000 hours of placement and align with a weighting of 15 ECTS credits each. As a result, students on the MSc in Physiotherapy will complete 90 credits per annum, totalling 180 credits across the duration of the programme. It was recognised by the Committee that this represents a significant sustained workload for students but is in accordance with Marks and Standards and necessary to meet the requirements of professional recognition.

The proposed change to the membership of the Accreditation Board was in response to the recommendation of Education Committee that the proposers consider inviting a member of an accrediting body to sit on the Accreditation Board.

The amendments to the Validation Report for the MSc in Physiotherapy were **approved**. The revised report will be submitted to Academic Council for noting.

7. DCU Futures: completion of the approval process

7.1 *BSc in Psychology and Disruptive Technologies*

This programme is led by the School of Psychology with input from the School of Computing. It was noted that the number of students this programme is attracting is in line with plans, and that it benefits from deep and multilayered engagement with industry partners. The programme has been the source of numerous innovations in assessment design and it has earned a positive reputation with respect to the student learning experience.

Some initial challenges were experienced with the programme timetable and the management of workload, for instance there was a significant impact on students who were unwell or unavailable during Innovative Pedagogy and Assessments (IPACs) such as Immersive Sprints, which are designed to take place in concentrated periods of time. Affording students the opportunity to input to curriculum design has worked very well and work on closing the feedback loop has been managed successfully and is an example of best practice in this regard. Dr Lorraine Boran, Chair of the Programme, spoke to HEA colleagues who were recently on a site visit and it was acknowledged that feedback has been embedded in a very comprehensive manner in the programme.

7.2 *BSc in Psychology and Mathematics*

It was noted that this programme was accredited prior to the launch of DCU Futures but the School of Psychology identified that the programme would be suitable as a DCU Futures programme nevertheless. This is a Joint Honours type programme. The three undergraduate degrees offered by the school are accredited by the Psychological Society of Ireland.

All the recommendations of Academic Council in relation to the Accreditation have been implemented except for Items 4 and 5. It has proven difficult to facilitate student mobility as recommended by the Accreditation Board, where students find that they prefer one subject over the other. The School is due to consider potential solutions to this challenge, including how to better bridge the two subjects of Mathematics and Psychology offered on the programme.

The second recommendation that has not yet been fully addressed concerns Group Identity and Employability (Item 5). At this point there is a critical mass of enrolled students,

although intake to the programme is no more than 10 students per annum. The programme shares up to 50% of its modules and classes with other programmes and it is proving challenging to timetable the programme's immersive experiences in blocks alongside traditionally timetabled programmes.

Evidence of changing approaches to delivery and assessment in Mathematics is growing across the programme. There was a discussion about the challenge that Mathematics presents to first year students who are engaging with Mathematical concepts that are not covered at Leaving Certificate or equivalent. A staff member has been recruited by the Faculty of Science and Health with a specific Futures remit to create modules and learning materials. Students also avail of the supports offered by the Maths Learning Centre.

7.3 *BSc in Digital Business Innovation*

Professor Elliott reported that the BSc in Digital Business Innovation is flourishing. It is attracting strong student numbers although the gender balance is something that is being monitored. There is a real concern that digital developments, including AI, will deepen the current gender divide relating to technology in business and other domains, and so gaining a good gender balance in this programme has particular importance.

It was noted that appropriate expertise is critical for the delivery of the programme, including competencies to support challenge-based learning

7.4 *BSc in Physics with Data Analytics*

Professor White advised that while the Programme Accreditation Review presents a number of deviations from the original plan for the programme, nevertheless the programme team has been successful in substantially progressing the recommendations from the original accreditation process. It was noted that:

- that the PAN programme team has embedded Futures concepts very successfully in the programme curriculum and have developed industry collaboration.
- they are building transversal skills in a meaningful way and have grown their industry links as the specialism evolved.

- Industry funding (Intel) was made available to create a Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) / hybrid learning space for the PAN students to enable them to engage with CBL.
- The original DCU Futures vision for a 4th year cross discipline / cross faculty Challenge Based Learning (CBL) element proved difficult to realise.
- An initial low uptake by students for the programme in 2022-23 at the end of the Year 1 common entry, has shifted somewhat with 14 students registering for the programme in 2023-24 and 12 students in 2024-25.

It was noted that some of the statements in the report are not supported by Education Committee and are not evidence-based. There is no doubt that innovative pedagogies can work well in both smaller and larger classes (Item 2) and it is possible to embed active pedagogies even where there are significant amounts of essential content (Item 3).

It was considered that some restrictions identified in the report are overstated. It is possible to implement CBL with or without interdisciplinary or industry partnerships. DCU Marks and Standards do not present any impediment to interdisciplinary collaboration.

It was agreed to formally close out the approval process for the following DCU Futures programmes:

- BSc in Psychology and Disruptive Technologies
- BSc in Psychology and Mathematics
- BSc in Digital Business Innovation
- BSc in Physics with Data Analytics

SECTION D: OTHER MATTERS

8. Faculty Periodic Programme Review (PPR) Report: Activities undertaken in 2023-24 and planned for 2024-25.

The Chair noted that the paper presents programmes for which Periodic Programme Reviews (PPRs) were completed in 2023-24 and those for which Periodic Programme Reviews are planned for 2024-25. It was recognised that, ideally, it would be possible to identify when each programme has last had a PPR and when its next PPR is due to take place

to verify that all programmes are being reviewed in an appropriate timeline. A report will be prepared by the OVPAA / Academic Secretariat in this regard.

Professor Looney advised that no DCU Institute of Education programmes completed a PPR in the 2023-24 academic year because the Faculty was undergoing its quality review and reaccreditation of several of its programmes by the Teaching Council. The normal cycle of PPRs has resumed in 2024-25.

9. Any other Business

9.1 *Student Feedback on Teaching (SSOT)*

Dr Ward gave an update on the roll out of the Student Survey of Teaching (SSOT) in Semester 1, 2024-25. Through the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning, the Faculties have confirmed which modules will be surveyed and, overall, one third of modules will be surveyed. The survey itself will be available on Loop and lecturers will be asked to facilitate students to complete the short survey in class to encourage greater participation. It is anticipated that many students will complete the survey in week 11. The Chair confirmed that she will be highlighting the SSOT in the Staff Update on 15 November 2024.

It was clarified that staff will see the outcomes of the survey for their respective modules immediately but that currently, students will not see the results of the surveys automatically.

It was noted that models for the provision of feedback to students will need to be considered by Programme Boards in the short term, while a review of the mechanism and platform utilised for collecting student feedback, and the approach to analysis and dissemination will be undertaken in due course.

Dr Keegan advised that QIO is working with colleagues in the Teaching Enhancement Unit on how to present outputs from the SSOT via PowerBI. This type of data will be important in demonstrating our response to CINNTE review recommendations in due course.

The Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students will not run in 2024-25 but it is likely that DCU will run its own survey.

Signed: _____Date: _____

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday, 11 December 2024
at 2.00 pm

Room AG01, Glasnevin Campus