

## **EDUCATION COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Wednesday, 11 December 2024

2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.

Room AG01, Glasnevin Campus

**Present:** Dr Claire Bohan, Dr Jennifer Bruton, Ms Aoife Butler, Professor Dominic Elliott, Professor Derek Hand, Professor Anne Looney, Professor Lisa Looney (Chair), Dr David Mc Carthy (Secretary), Dr Ruth McManus, Ms Pauline Mooney, Professor Sharon O’Brien, Dr Monica Ward and Professor Blánaid White

**Apologies:** Professor Mark Brown, Professor John Doyle and Dr Rachel Keegan

**In attendance:** Dr Jing Burgi-Tian

### **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 13 November 2024**

The minutes of the meeting of Education Committee of 13 November 2024 were **approved** and signed by the Chair.

**3. Matters arising from the minutes of 13 November 2024**

- 3.1 An overview of the achievements relating to the Teaching and Learning Strategy at the end of year one is included on the agenda (Item 4.1).
- 3.2 The accreditation process for DCU Futures programmes will be concluded at the January meeting of Education Committee.
- 3.3 Revised documentation has been reviewed and the Secretary is liaising with the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning to resolve one query and close out this item.

**SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS****4. Strategic academic initiatives****4.1 *Teaching and Learning Strategy: Year One Achievements***

The Chair informed the Committee that townhall meetings will be scheduled in the new year to provide updates to colleagues following the first year implementing 'DCU Strategy 2023-2028: Transformation for an Unscripted Future' and the University's performance with respect to its strategic priorities.

The Chair explained that while the Teaching and Learning (T&L) Strategy will be considered as a component plan as part of the annual review of 'DCU Strategy 2023-2028', the objectives achieved during this first year should be considered separately by Education Committee in order to fully appreciate the University's progress to date and to agree the objectives for the following year.

The Chair provided an update to the Committee on the achievements to the end of September 2024 with respect to each of the three high-level priorities that comprise the T&L Strategy: excellence, flexibility and student-focused academic services. The presentation delivered by the Chair was shared with members of Education Committee alongside the other documentation for the meeting.

1. **Excellence** (innovating DCU's curriculum, with a focus on excellent, distinctive teaching, learning and assessment)
  - a. DCU Futures (Fully Delivered): Year 3 of five new programmes and five new specialisms delivered in full, transversal skills fully embedded in fifteen programmes and internal evaluation of DCU Futures project progressed as planned.
  - b. Revised Academic Integrity Policy (Fully Delivered): Revised versions of DCU's Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure for Academic Misconduct Investigation and Sanction were implemented.
  - c. Expansion of Portfolio (Significantly Delivered): DCU's portfolio of programmes was expanded to enable the University to deliver the planned student profile and grow identified areas of opportunity.
  - d. Teaching & Learning Professional Development Programme (In Progress): The outline structure for a professional development programme in teaching and learning for early career academics in DCU has been designed and is ready for broader consultation with relevant stakeholders across the University.
2. **Flexibility** (addressing the diversity of learner needs and emerging system priorities through models of provision, pathways, and curriculum design)
  - a. Short-form Learning Portfolio and Provision for Off-campus Learners (In Progress): Significant work has been undertaken by all faculties to expand DCU's short-form learning portfolio but systems limitations and student uptake continue to pose a challenge.
  - b. 70 % Eligible Undergraduate Programmes admit >5% students via Further Education Route (Significantly Delivered): Notable progress has been made in meeting the target for admissions via the Further Education (FE) route.

- 3. Student-focused Academic Services** (transforming how students experience academic services and enabling flexible, innovative curricula supported by new systems and services)
- a. Redesign of core academic services completed, Applications and Admissions service implemented via SIS, and project on timetabling initiated (Significantly Delivered): Redesigned core academic services have been operationalised, including applications, admissions and enrolment on SIS.
  - b. Support Model to realise European-funded Projects and related Curricular Objectives (Partially Delivered): Support model for such projects, including Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters programmes, has been developed and considered by Finance and DCU People.
  - c. Agreed Priorities in place for development of Placement in all Faculties (Significantly Progressed): There has been enhanced engagement with all Faculties, especially in the area of international mobilities.

The Chair noted that DCU Futures and the redesign of core academic services were ‘whole of institution’ deliverables. The University’s success in these areas relied on significant inputs from all five faculties, as well as support from DCU Studio and the Teaching Enhancement Unit and from colleagues in Academic Affairs, Academic Systems, Registry, the DCU Futures Team, DCU People, DCU Placement and Finance.

With regard to the objectives for Year 2 of implementing the T&L Strategy, the Committee agreed that the three high-level priorities that comprise the T&L Strategy, i.e., excellence, flexibility and student-focused academic services, should not be changed.

The Chair sought the input from the Executive Deans to determine what should be prioritised in Year 2 with respect to excellence. The proposed objectives include delivering Year 4 of DCU Futures; achieving Transversal Skills aims as per the Performance Agreement; rolling out the new university-wide approach to student feedback on teaching, revising programmes in response to emerging developments in Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), with a focus on revisions to modules; embedding Challenge-Based Learning in all faculties as part of the ECIU University Project; approving the structured professional

development programme in teaching and learning for early-career academics; and further expanding DCU's portfolio of programmes and short-form courses.

The Committee recognised that due to the evolving nature of GenAI, it may not be possible to achieve that particular objective in one year but that all faculties are committed to reviewing their curriculum and the continuum of revising modules.

The Committee agreed that, with respect to flexibility, the objectives for Year 2 should be achieving the target for FE learners as per the Performance Agreement and developing a university-level plan to enable DCU to respond to the upskilling and reskilling needs of target learners. The Chair noted that achieving these two objectives will allow DCU to consider how the diverse needs of prospective learners can be accommodated rather than focusing primarily on the diversity of current learners.

The Committee agreed that, with respect to student-focused academic services, the primary objectives should be completing the implementation phases of the SIS project and transitioning to 'business as usual', which involves implementing new governance structures, establishing the new Curriculum Service, and delivering centralised reporting functions. Additional objectives include preparing a plan for decommissioning ITS and the timetabling project, commencing the curriculum management project and establishing supports for the 'European' component of DCU's Vision Statement.

## SECTION C: PROGRAMME AND MODULE-SPECIFIC MATTERS

### 5. DCU Business School

#### 5.1 *Validation Proposal: MSc in Business Analytics*

The MSc in Business Analytics was **approved** to proceed to accreditation for delivery as a primarily in-person/on campus programme subject to the below recommendations being addressed in the accreditation proposal:

- Revise the section on RPL to reflect DCU's institutional RPL approach.
- Given that the proposal states that "Challenge-based learning (CBL) will be a key pedagogy in this programme", CBL content should be increased across the curriculum to substantiate this very welcome emphasis.
- An alternative nomination for the Accreditation Board should be made to ensure there is an appropriate gender mix. This needs to be approved by Education Committee in advance of the accreditation.

In parallel to the accreditation, DCU Business School (DCUBS) is advised to develop a mechanism that will allow graduates of the funded Graduate Diploma in Business Analytics to progress to complete the MSc., presuming this programme is successfully accredited.

DCUBS is also encouraged to explore the appetite within the faculty specifically, and demand in the market more generally, for delivering the MSc in Business Analytics fully online and making it available to both domestic and international learners.

The Committee recognised that the University has yet to fully articulate its position with regard to fully online, full time, major awards delivered to students domiciled outside Ireland, nor what would be required to appropriately support student learning in that context. It was acknowledged that there are significant educational and operational considerations to be made in this regard but that these cannot be fully understood without first developing and delivering a suitable programme within clearly delineated parameters. Should there be the appetite within the faculty, and a viable prospect of attracting international students in appropriate numbers, the Committee encouraged DCUBS to work with colleagues in OVPA to scope out what the considerations would be, and how they would address them as a first example of such a delivery.

## 5.2 *Revised Academic Offering: MSc in Business Administration*

The proposal to create a new pathway in Aviation Leadership in the MSc in Business Administration was **approved**.

## **6. Faculty of Engineering and Computing**

### **6.1 School of Electronic Engineering: Proposals for Dual Awards**

Professor Jennifer Bruton, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Computing (FEC), set out the context for establishing dual awards with four higher education institutions in France. These dual awards will allow students who have completed the penultimate year in the Diplôme d'ingénieur programme in DeVinci Higher Education, École centrale d'électronique (ECE), INSA Toulouse and Télécom SudParis (TSP) to enrol on the MEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering at DCU, with 60 credits from the DCU programme contributing toward the Diplôme award from their home institution.

#### **6.1.1 DeVinci Higher Education**

Education Committee agreed that, based on the standing of the institution, the proposal to establish a dual award with DeVinci Higher Education should proceed.

#### **6.1.2 École centrale d'électronique (ECE)**

Education Committee agreed that, based on the standing of the institution, the proposal to establish a dual award with École centrale d'électronique (ECE) should proceed.

#### **6.1.3 INSA Toulouse**

Education Committee agreed that, based on the standing of the institution, the proposal to establish a dual award with INSA Toulouse should proceed.

#### **6.1.4 Télécom SudParis (TSP)**

Education Committee agreed that, based on the standing of the institution, the proposal to establish a dual award with Télécom SudParis (TSP) should proceed.

It was noted that a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is being prepared by FEC in consultation with OVPA for each of the four partner institutions, which will set out the details for each collaborative provision arrangement.

## 7. Faculty of Science and Health

### 7.1 *Validation Proposal: MSc in Behavioural Science for Innovation and Design*

The validation proposal for the MSc in Behavioural Science for Innovation and Design was considered by Education Committee. There was general support for the introduction of the programme and the Committee acknowledged the extensive stakeholder engagement undertaken to evidence demand for the programme.

Members commented on the possible misalignment of claims regarding the technical ability of graduates to 'solve challenges' and the content of the curriculum. Members also queried the mismatch between fully open entry requirements from a discipline perspective and the indication of the mix of students expected. The Committee clarified that entry requirements have to be fairly and equitably applied and 'curating' a mix of students from different disciplines is problematic in the context of applying admission requirements equitably.

With regard to the validation proposal itself, the Committee raised a number of queries regarding the financial model for the MSc in Behavioural Science for Innovation and Design, in particular, the number of academic staff relative to the projected enrolment numbers, and the anticipated workload involved in developing and delivering the programme relative to this number of staff.

Confirmation is sought with respect to the existing capacity within the School of Psychology to develop and deliver elements of the programme as it is proposed. The Committee also requests that the financial model is revised so that the projected enrolment numbers are aligned with the additional resource requirements. The revised validation proposal should be submitted for the January meeting of Education Committee.

### 7.2 *Revised Academic Offering: MSc in Child and Family Health and Wellbeing*

The Chair noted that stand-alone Graduate Diploma programmes are not normally financially well supported through our core funding model so the specific funding context for these proposals is important. Target learners require only 60 credits at Level 9 for career progression and are often only funded by the HSE for a 12-month period, which means DCU's current offering of a Master of Science comprising 90 credits delivered over two years,



with the option of exiting with a Graduate Diploma after 18 months, is no longer competitive within the sector.

The proposal to create a Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Health and Wellbeing as a stand-alone programme was **approved**.

### 7.3 *Revised Academic Offering: MSc in Health and Social Inclusion*

The proposal to create a Graduate Diploma in Health and Social Inclusion as a stand-alone programme was **approved**.

### 7.4 *Revised Academic Offering: MSc in Specialist Nursing*

The proposal to create a Graduate Diploma in Specialist Nursing as a stand-alone programme was **approved**.

The Committee raised a number of concerns regarding the workload attached to the Graduate Diploma programmes, which will be delivered part-time over one year to students who are in full-time employment. It is recommended that the School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health keep the student experience on the Graduate Diploma programmes under review during the first few iterations to ensure the workload remains consistent with the ECTS weighting but is manageable and that students are able to properly engage with all components of the curriculum in conjunction with their work commitments.

## 8. **Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

### 8.1 *Validation Proposal: Bachelor of Laws (LLB)*

The validation proposal for the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) was deferred to the January meeting of Education Committee to allow members to fully consider the implications of what is being proposed. It was noted that the proposal directly contravenes *Marks and Standards*, in particular, that a student may not present the same ECTS credits as qualifications for more than one DCU award (M&S 2.4.4).

Members raised a number of additional points regarding the Bachelor of Laws (LLB), including:

- The justification for the level of award being sought is questionable; 50% of the content is already delivered as part of L8 Bachelor programmes and it is proposed that graduates with specific level 8 modules have met the outcomes of half of the programme. The majority of comparable programmes, i.e. TUD, UCC and UL, lead to a Level 8 award.
- The complexities and practicalities of co-teaching 50% of the curriculum with undergraduate students need to be acknowledged, in particular, how two cohorts of students can be taught the same content but with different levels of learning outcomes and assessment strategies. While co-teaching does take place in very specific circumstances in DCU, delivering 50% of a curriculum through a co-teaching mode would represent a significant departure for the University.
- Did the proposers consider any alternative models for delivering a LLB programme that can be completed in two years by non-law graduates and in one year by law graduates?

The programme proposers are asked to prepare a memo addressing these queries and submit it for the January meeting of Education Committee so it can be considered in conjunction with the validation proposal.

#### **SECTION D: OTHER MATTERS**

##### **9. Any Other Business**

There were no items of other business.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of next meeting:**

Wednesday, 22 January 2025  
at 2.00 pm

Room AG01, Glasnevin Campus