
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 5 March 2014

2.00-4.05 p.m. in A204

- Present:** Professor Eithne Guilfoyle (Chair), Professor Alan Harvey, Dr Sarah Ingle, Mr Billy Kelly, Dr Lisa Looney, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Professor Barry McMullin, Mr Martin Molony, Mr Ciarán O'Connor, Dr Anne Sinnott, Dr Fionnuala Waldron, Dr Sheelagh Wickham
- Apologies:** Dr Claire Bohan, Professor John Costello, Dr John Doyle
- In attendance:** Professor Mark Brown, Ms Valerie Cooke, Ms Aisling McKenna, Dr Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl

The Chair welcomed Professor Mark Brown, Professor of Digital Learning, to his first meeting of the Education Committee.

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 5 February 2014

The minutes were confirmed subject to the correction of Professor McMullin's title in Item 3.7. They were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** It was noted that processes and templates for collaborative research supervision would be discussed by the Graduate Research Studies Board at its meeting of 6 March 2014. (Item 3.1)

- 3.2** It was noted that discussions were in progress about a number of issues relating to the use of mobile telephone data. (Item 3.2)
- 3.3** It was noted that the working group on approval procedures would make its recommendations to the EC at the meeting of 2 April 2014. (Item 3.3)
- 3.5** Mr Kelly summarised the deliberations to date of the working group on challenging modules, noting that he would provide the EC with further, updated, information in due course and also that the group would undertake further analysis of a range of issues including the impact of performance in Mathematics on failure rates more broadly. The importance of evaluating the impact of whatever measures are decided upon and implemented was noted. (See also Item 7.3 below.) (Item 3.4)
- 3.6** It was noted that the combined policy on feedback and assessment would be placed on the web pages of the Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning. (Item 3.5)
- 3.7** It was noted that the Chair was in the process of completing a report to the Chief Operating Officer on issues associated with the ITS system, with a view to facilitating a decision about the appropriate course of action to be taken about a student records system for the future. (Item 3.6)
- 3.8** The report of the working group which had reviewed the DCU approach to outstanding fees was noted, and the work of the group was noted as having been useful and informative for all concerned. The importance of communicating the recommendations shortly to be implemented, to students and academic staff alike, was noted, and in this respect the need to inform Heads of School and Programme Chairs was agreed to be very important. One consequence of the implementation of the recommendations is that academic staff will henceforth need to adhere to them closely rather than making local or *ad hoc* arrangements for students. Among the other issues raised in discussion were the following: the importance of ensuring procedures for research students in arrears with fees; the importance of including examination appeals in the list of items which could be the subject of sanctions; the desirability of avoiding, to the extent possible, making explicit the information that a student's account is under review. The Chair undertook to mention to Senior Management, which had set up the working group, that it would be desirable to rewrite it as a policy and associated procedures and include explicit information about procedures for communicating these to all stakeholders. (Item 3.7)
- 3.9** It was noted that the report of the validation process for the proposed BA Social and Human Services had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 12 February 2014. (Item 3.8)

- 3.10** It was noted that the e-portfolio initiative would formally be launched in due course. (Item 6.1.2)
- 3.11** It was noted that a report on the working of APR in each Faculty would be made to the EC at its meeting of 2 April 2014. (Item 6.2.3)
- 3.12** It was noted that the working group on timetabling was continuing its deliberations. (Item 7.2)
- 3.13** It was noted that agreement had been reached on the procedures for outlining the financial arrangements to be made with respect to validation proposals involving the Incorporation institutions. (See also Item 9 below.) (Item 9.2)

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Update on activities undertaken within the IUA

It was noted that the IUA groups would meet in DCU on 31 March 2014. Among the items on the agenda for the meeting of the Registrars' group is the importance of ensuring appropriate transitional arrangements for students on concurrent teacher education programmes who need to repeat years of programmes but must also meet newly-introduced Teaching Council requirements. Dr Wickham noted that she and colleagues from St Patrick's College and Mater Dei Institute of Education were discussing the issues and would submit a paper, with recommendations, to the Chair for possible use at the meeting of 31 March.

5. Report on the Irish Survey of Student Engagement

- 5.1** Ms McKenna noted that the response rate to the 2014 survey had, to date, been disappointingly low and that she and the Students' Union Executive had devoted time to discussing ways of remedying this and intended to implement some actions in the near future. A number of reasons for the low response rate were adduced, including technical and wording issues, the fact that many other significant events are taking place in the University at present and, possibly, the fact that communication of the importance of the survey needs to be enhanced.

- 5.2** It was noted that the University's offer to make a donation to the student hardship fund for every survey completed appeared not to have appealed to students. Professor Brown noted the experience with AUSSE, the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement, which indicated that students tend to prefer the opportunity of obtaining a personal reward for survey completion and also, more broadly, that the information yielded by such surveys tends not to be as useful to institutions as internally-generated institutional information.
- 5.3** A number of additional suggestions for increasing engagement with the survey were discussed, including focusing on providing information to students taking modules in Years 1 and 4 that have large numbers of students.

6. EC goals 2013/14

6.1 Online Steering Group

Mr Kelly noted that the Group was due to meet shortly and expected to benefit significantly from Professor Brown's extensive experience in the field. It was agreed that it would be ensured that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education were appropriately represented on the Group.

6.2 QuEST

- 6.2.1** It was noted that the response rate in relation to QuEST in Semester 1 2013/14 had been low, and agreed that every effort would be made to increase the rate in Semester 2.
- 6.2.2** It was noted that some members of academic staff preferred to use their own bespoke surveys of teaching quality, finding that these tend to yield richer results.
- 6.2.3** The importance of focusing on the other aspects of QuEST (besides the survey of student opinion) was noted, as was the need for an operating manual for Heads of School. More broadly, it was agreed that a widely-focused marketing campaign would be necessary if QuEST were to become appropriately embedded in the University. The Chair and Mr Kelly are to discuss these issues with a view to developing recommendations as to future action. Meanwhile, the existing QuEST documentation will be placed on the web pages of the Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning.
- 6.2.4** It was agreed that, while QuEST is an important issue to outline to incoming Heads of School, there are many others, and it might well be useful to develop an information pack for Heads about the full range of academic-related procedures they are likely to need to use. It was agreed that this matter would be considered again by the EC.

7. Semester 1 examination results, and identification of ‘at-risk’ students

- 7.1** In presenting the report on these issues, Ms McKenna noted the decline relative to previous years in the proportion of students deemed at risk. Other features of the report include the indication that, while median entry points to undergraduate programmes have increased, and more students are taking Higher Level Mathematics than formerly, there is no concomitant increase in performance in this subject; additionally, the pattern of previous years seems to be repeated, whereby approximately one third of students deemed at risk withdraw from the University, one third progress and graduate albeit a year behind their original cohort, and one third make up lost ground relatively early and graduate with their cohort, often performing quite well. Ms McKenna undertook to send each Dean of Faculty the detailed information concerning his or her ‘at-risk’ students.
- 7.2** A discussion took place about the influence of certain aspects of Marks and Standards on the progression of students deemed at risk, though it was noted that such students’ level of disengagement with academic activities is often such that Marks and Standards may well not be particularly significant.
- 7.3** It was agreed that the working group on challenging modules (see Item 3.5 above) would discuss relevant aspects of the report. It was further agreed that it would be important to repeat previous practice in terms of following up with students previously deemed at risk who had successfully completed their programmes so as to learn more about the variables that led to their ultimately satisfactory performance.

8. Formal withdrawals from the University: reasons and trends

In presenting this report, Ms McKenna noted that analysis was in a transitional stage owing to the significant changes from previous years in the lists of reasons for withdrawal (though it is likely that these changes will ultimately yield more satisfactory information). It was noted that the number of withdrawals from years other than first year was relatively high.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

9. Validation proposal: Bachelor of Early Childhood Education

It was agreed to refer this proposal to the Validation Subgroup meeting of 11 March 2014. Among the issues to be considered by the Subgroup are the following:

- it was noted that the proposal precedes the establishment of the Institute of Education, and the question arises as to whether or not this timing is optimum

- it was suggested that the proposed student numbers appeared rather ambitious, particularly from the perspective of retention
- issues arise in respect of the proposal to offer a Diploma and a Level 7 qualification; it would be important to make a strategic case for the proposal to provide a Level 7 qualification
- the programme learning outcomes could usefully encompass reference to the education of, as distinct from communication with, parents, and it would also be important to include reference in them to intercultural issues
- the documentation does not make it as clear as would be ideal what the staffing resources available to the programme would be; in this connection, it will be particularly important to advert to likely Teaching Council requirements
- queries arise around the funding model, including though not confined to the reference to funding available for marking and supervision
- it will be important to ensure adequate support for students on placements
- it may prove desirable to recommend the addition of a second male nominee to the Accreditation Board.

10. Proposal for a new pathway on the BA in Humanities leading to a BA in Humanities (Psychology Major)

Approved.

11. Two proposed Springboard programmes: Certificate in Computing and Communications Technology and Certificate in Software Systems and Entrepreneurship

Approved.

12. Proposed pathway in Health Care Ethics on the MA in Ethics

Decision deferred pending consideration of the proposed pathway by the Faculty of Science and Health.

13. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting:

<p>Wednesday 2 April 2014, 2.00 p.m. in A204</p>

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____