

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Wednesday 1 October 2014

2.00-3.40 p.m. in A204

**Present:** Professor Eithne Guilfoyle (Chair), Dr Claire Bohan,  
Professor Mark Brown, Professor John Costello,  
Professor John Doyle, Mr Gary Gillick,  
Dr Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Professor Alan Harvey,  
Dr Sarah Ingle, Mr Billy Kelly, Professor Lisa Looney,  
Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Professor Barry McMullin,  
Dr Anne Sinnott, Professor Fionnuala Waldron

**In attendance:** Ms Aisling McKenna

The Chair, on behalf of the Education Committee, welcomed Dr Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl to membership of the EC in her capacity as representative of the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education. She noted that the vacancy for a representative of Academic Council to the EC would be filled as soon as possible.

**SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of 3 September 2014**

The minutes were confirmed and were signed by the Chair.

**3. Matters arising from the minutes**

- 3.1** It was noted that the ePortfolio initiative would formally be launched in due course. (Item 3.2)

- 3.2** It was noted that the working group on timetabling was continuing its deliberations. (Item 3.3)
- 3.3** With respect to the revised Joint Honours programme in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, it was noted that discussions were in progress about the feasibility of grouping subject combinations on transcripts of results for ease of reference. (Item 3.5)
- 3.4** It was noted that Professor Guilfoyle and Mr Kelly were in discussion about the feedback to be drawn up and circulated to Faculties on foot of the Faculties' reports to the EC on the implementation of APR in 2013/14. (Item 3.6)
- 3.5** It was noted that the description of progress with respect to QuEST had been reworded and that consideration was being given to the implementation of the non-SSOT elements of QuEST. (Item 3.7)
- 3.6** It was noted that the PhD.ie initiative would be launched in due course. (Item 4.2)
- 3.7** It was noted that Professor Looney would make a presentation on graduate research performance metrics to the EC at its meeting of 3 December 2014. (Item 6.4)
- 3.8** It was noted that the membership of the EC Standing Committee had been determined for the first half of 2014/15 and that the membership for the second half of 2014/15 would be determined in December 2014. (Item 8)

## **SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **4. Update on activities undertaken within the IUA**

The Chair noted that the content of the IUA Symposium, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Universities – Performance and Sustainability*, which had taken place on 29 September 2014, was available on line and that the members of the EC were encouraged to engage with it.

### **5. Report on the Irish Survey of Student Engagement**

Mr Kelly and Ms McKenna noted that DCU had submitted a response to the draft (institution-specific) report on ISSE outcomes 2014 which had been made available, that the report containing headline information on sector-wide outcomes would be published in October 2014, and that all work relating to ISSE was ongoing in DCU.

## 6. EC goals 2014/2015

- 6.1** The importance of incorporating a focus on sustainability issues into the goals was noted. It was noted too that sustainability issues are already addressed in a range of modules across the University and that it would be helpful, in the context of the goals, to maintain awareness of this; additionally, an online module, developed by Open Education for DCU Business School, is already being taken by a sizeable number of students and could potentially be tailored for other Faculties. Other relevant issues were noted as being the difficulty of accommodating additional face-to-face (and even online) modules in already full programmes, the importance of balancing flexibility of choice for students with operational needs such as the need to forecast class sizes, considerations relating to cross-curricular modules as articulated at previous meetings of the EC, and the potential relevance of such modules to research students.
- 6.2** It was agreed that two amendments to the goals should be drafted and circulated for the consideration of the EC and final approval. The first of these is to the list of priority tasks associated with goal 1, where a reference to the development of a sense of responsibility with respect to sustainability issues is to be inserted in the context of the Generation 21 framework. The second is to the list of priority tasks associated with goal 3, where a new task is to be inserted addressing the potential development of a portfolio relating to the *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020*. It was agreed to re-number all the goals and associated priority tasks to make the list easier to read.
- 6.3** It was agreed that, after the list of goals had been finalised, a revised version of the document illustrating the synergies between them and the associated actions in *Transforming Lives and Societies* and the Teaching and Learning component strategic plan would be drawn up.

## 7. Report on examination performance 2013/14

- 7.1** Ms McKenna presented this report noting, *inter alia*, some outcomes and trends relating to particular programmes. In the course of her presentation, and in the ensuing discussion, the following were noted:
- it is important to manage students' expectations about the standard of Mathematics that will be expected of them on relevant programmes, as far as this is possible in advance of entry, because difficulties with Mathematics appear to account for a considerable proportion of progression problems
  - it should be kept in mind that progression issues affect students in higher years of programmes and not just in Year 1

- with respect to students initially deemed ‘at risk’ who improve their academic performance and progress and graduate, the significant contributory factor seems to be personal resilience in the face of the difficulties encountered
- allowing students to carry failed modules into the next year of programmes carries risks in terms of the students’ ability to cope with the workload in the next year; on the other hand, having to take a repeat year may militate against the likelihood of students remaining on programmes, in certain circumstances.

**7.2** The importance of linking institution-specific and national discussions on the issues was noted, as was the need to link the discussions to funding opportunities (in this regard, the possibility of having funding to support retention issues made available by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning was noted). It was agreed that the Chair, Mr Kelly and Ms McKenna would meet to discuss these matters.

## **8. Report on outcomes of exercise on assessment practices**

**8.1** It was noted that this report had indicated that, while large class sizes tended to have an adverse effect on the ability of academic staff to provide feedback on assessment, and the relative absence of feedback on performance in examinations was perceived as a drawback, there were positive features also. These include the fact that group work does not appear to be a problematic aspect of assessment and that there appears to be an increasing level of alignment between learning outcomes and assessment strategies.

**8.2** Some issues with respect to the management of communication with external examiners were identified, such as the fact that external examiners do not always see samples of continuous assessment work, including work from the later years of programmes.

**8.3** It was agreed that the issues would be discussed by the University Standards Committee and that the outcome of the discussion would be made available to the EC in the course of 2014/15.

## **9. Report on PPR activities completed in 2013/14 and planned for 2014/15**

Noted.

**SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES**

- 10. Proposed advanced entry arrangement to DCU Business School programmes with Chinese university (SWUFE – Southwestern University of Finance and Commerce)**

Approved. Agreed that Professor Guilfoyle, Professor Looney and Dr Sinnott would discuss the proposed arrangement between DCU Business School and Brock University in Canada.

- 11. Any other business**

None.

**Date of next meeting:**

**Wednesday 29 October 2014, 2.00 p.m. in A204**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

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