

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

12 October 2011

2.00-3.00 p.m. in AG01

PRESENT:

M Ali	E Guilfoyle	N Murphy
L Barry	S Hashmi	M Nic Giolla Mhichíl
M Brady	J Hughes	S O'Brien
O Bree	M Humphrys	P O'Byrne
P Brereton	B Kelly	C Ó Ciardubháin
J Bruen	D Kenny	R O'Connor
J Bruton	P Kinsella	C Ó Cuinn
C Byrne	M Kirwan	G O'Donoghue
P J Byrne	S Knowlton	P Ó Flatharta
J Carroll	J Lalor	J O'Hara
B Casey	J Lynch	J O'Higgins-Norman
E Clancy	B McConalogue	R O'Kennedy
Mary Clynes	B MacCraith (President)	E O'Riordan
J Costello	L McDermott (Secretary)	A Pearson-Evans
P Cummins	C McDonagh	M Pryce
E Cunningham	C McGivern	M Roantree
T Dalzell	S McGovern	R Sadleir
Y Delauré	A McGrady	A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)
R Devery	C McGroary	M Scott
J Doyle	J McManis	D Sinclair
I Farragher	P McMorrow	M Slowey
O Finlayson	M Molony	A Stover
R Flynn	G Moore	R Tobin
A Foley	P Moore	G Warrington
Y Gao	K Moran	S Wickham
J Geraghty	A Morrissey	P Young
D Ging	M Munro	

APOLOGIES:

D Brabazon	B Flood	C Mac Murchaidh
Martin Clynes	P Flood	C O’Gorman
E Connolly	G Hughes	D Reynolds
P Donnelly	S Ingle	H Ruskin
J Dowling	A Kennedy	P Sheehan
H Esmonde	C Long	A Sinnott
C Fagan	L Looney	P Willis
M Farren	P McDonagh	

The President welcomed all the members of Academic Council to this first meeting of the academic year 2011/12, noting in particular the presence among the new members of Mr Ciarán Ó Cuinn, Executive Director of External and Strategic Affairs, and Mr Ciarán McGivern, Director of Finance.

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the transfer of Item 11 from Section C to Section B and the inclusion of two submissions under Item 15.

A: Minutes and related issues**2. Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 27 June 2011**

The minutes, which had been confirmed electronically on 13 July 2011, were signed by the President.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1** Revisions to the Academic Calendar 2011/12 – specifically with reference to the dates pertaining to examinations and related issues in May/June 2012, with a view to reinstating the timeline which obtained in previous years – were approved. It was agreed that, at the 14 December 2011 meeting of Academic Council, which includes consideration of the Academic Calendar for 2012/13, discussion would take place about the possibility of shortening the examination period by scheduling more than one examination per day. The Deputy President/Registrar noted, however, that in a general sense it would be preferable to minimise changes to the Calendar in the shorter term, pending broader developments which might necessitate changes from a strategic perspective. (Item 3.1 from the meeting of 8 June 2011)

- 3.2** Various views were expressed about the fitness for purpose of the experimental electronic distribution system for Academic Council papers. It was suggested that mechanisms be devised to facilitate both printing and electronic retrieval of documents. It was noted that formal feedback would be sought from Council members in mid-December with a view to agreeing a system from 2012 onwards. (Item 3.1)
- 3.3** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the summary of progress and planned future activities in respect of e-learning, following from the work of the Virtual and Online Learning Group to date, would be made available to Academic Council. The future activities planned would necessitate decisions in respect of resource allocation. (Item 3.3)
- 3.4** The Deputy President/Registrar outlined the activities to date of the IUA working group, chaired by Professor Tom Collins of NUI Maynooth, which is tasked with making recommendations in respect of the application and admissions system to higher education. Noting that it is the Academic Councils of the universities which ultimately approve applications and admissions systems and any changes to them, the Deputy President/Registrar encouraged the members of Academic Council to read the documentation presented at the *Transition or transaction? Moving from second to third level education in Ireland* conference held on 21 September 2011 (with particular reference to the submissions from the IUA and from Professor Áine Hyland), and to submit feedback to her. The Admissions Officers' Association has been asked to comment on the feasibility of the various recommendations which were made. One area of particular interest to the working group is the impact of the second-level terminal examination process on student learning. The working group will continue its deliberations over the coming weeks, and updated information will be made available to Academic Council at its meeting of 14 December 2011. (Item 5.3)
- 3.5** The President noted that the formal launch of the Graduate Attributes had taken place on 8 September 2011 and expressed congratulations to all involved. The associated developmental work will continue to be undertaken, on a university-wide basis. (Item 5.4)
- 3.6** The proposals on plagiarism which had been put to Academic Council are under consideration by the Disciplinary Committee, and the view of the Committee will be made known to Academic Council at its meeting of 14 December 2011. (Item 6.3)
- 3.7** The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the Staff/Student Engagement Conference, held on 13/14 September 2011, had been a very considerable success, and expressed appreciation to Dr Sheelagh Wickham and her fellow organisers. She noted too that a number of positive outcomes of the Conference were becoming apparent and that these included the sharing of information on the METIS system used to manage teaching practice in Mater Dei Institute of Education. (See also Item 5.6 below.) (Item 12.1)

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Graduate Studies Board of 5 May 2011 and 30 June 2011

Approved. The references in both sets of minutes to the difficulties experienced by some overseas students in terms of academic writing in English, notwithstanding the fact that they have met the University's English-language requirements in admissions terms, were noted. It was noted also that the issue had been discussed by the University Standards Committee. It was agreed to request Dr Lisa Looney, Dean of Graduate Studies, to liaise with Mr Ciarán Ó Cuinn with a view to developing recommendations to alleviate the situation.

B: Policy and strategy issues

5. President's report

- 5.1** The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 is now in the intensive implementation phase. Consultation documents are being made available, and the focus is currently on mergers and consolidations, the regional impact of higher education and the new relationship, based on the concept of strategic dialogue, between higher education and government. Efficiency, effectiveness and avoidance of duplication are being prioritised. A further consultation document, on the sustainability of higher education, is awaited. The members of Academic Council will be kept informed of developments.
- 5.2** Discussions on the strategic alliance between DCU, the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland are continuing to progress, with a meeting between the Presidents/CEO and the Chancellors of the three institutions planned for the near future. It is intended that structures and processes to facilitate the alliance will be identified by the end of 2011. A briefing session for University staff will be held if requested; members of Academic Council are encouraged to let the President know their views in this regard.
- 5.3** Following the conclusion of the series of visits by the President to Schools and Units across the University, a second stage of strategic planning is due to start. Once again, there will be involvement from the University community as a whole. Governing Authority will have to approve the DCU strategic plan; from now on, however, strategic planning will be conceived of as a rolling activity, with plans being updated on a yearly basis.

- 5.4** DCU Educational Trust, having ascertained what models of best practice exist internationally, has initiated a process designed to target philanthropic funding requests, on a prioritised basis, in areas such as capital infrastructure, human resource capital, student initiatives and community development. Input to this process will be solicited from all members of the University community.
- 5.5** The very successful visit to India which took place in September 2011 is expected to lead to positive developments in terms of the University's internationalisation agenda. Another visit is planned soon, this time to the USA and specifically to Arizona State University, Northeastern University and the University of Massachusetts-Lowell. Members of Academic Council who may have contacts in these institutions are requested to make this known to the President.
- 5.6** Congratulations are extended to the organisers of the recent Staff/Student Engagement conference, which very successfully showcased good practice, comparable with international good practice, in the University and the linked colleges. (See also Item 3.7 above.)
- 5.7** Members of Academic Council are requested to advise the President about what they would consider to be the most effective means of communication between him and the University community.
- 5.8** The recruitment process for the Director of Communications is at an advanced stage.

6. Proposals on Teaching Quality Evaluation and Enhancement

The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the working group on Teaching Quality Evaluation and Enhancement had made recommendations to the Education Committee at its meeting of 5 October 2011 and that, following discussion there, the recommendations had been sent to Faculties with a request for their input. The issue will be on the agenda of the 14 December 2011 meeting of Academic Council for detailed discussion.

11. Register of programmes recognised by the Teaching Council

Noted. However, significant concern was expressed by the members of Council in respect of developments since recognition was originally extended to the various programmes. A number of these developments have implications for both the eligibility of graduates of the University to enter the teaching profession and the accuracy of the information provided to students, and prospective students, about this eligibility. There are also other issues, such as the fact that Engineering programmes in the University do not enjoy recognition for the purposes of teaching Mathematics

whereas comparable programmes in other institutions do. It was agreed that the Deputy President/Registrar, working through the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education, would establish a working group to quantify all the problems in the first instance and then, within as short a timeframe as possible, open a dialogue with the Teaching Council with a view to resolving them. The importance of including discipline specialists in the dialogue with the Teaching Council was noted.

C: Items for formal approval/noting

7. Matters from the Education Committee and the University Standards Committee

Approved.

8. Accreditation recommendation: Graduate Certificate in Sustainable Energy Finance

Approved. The President extended congratulations to all involved, noting that he had been present at the very successful launch of the programme.

9. Register of Academic Council members 2011/12

Noted. Noted also that a very small number of updates would need to be made to the register in the coming weeks.

10. Register of programmes accredited in 2010/11

Noted.

12. Reports from Autumn 2011 examinations/Progression and Awards Boards

Noted and approved.

13. Report from Autumn 2011 Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees

Noted and approved. Noted that, with effect from February 2012, the wording of the report would be revised to make it clear that all students, including those who fail or are requested to resubmit, are considered by the Faculty Awards Boards.

14. Report from the Disciplinary Appeals Committee

Noted.

15. Any other business

15.1 The Deputy President/Registrar noted that, in line with the relevant recommendation in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, an annual national student survey is planned. An earlier intention of using a SIF-funded questionnaire will now not be implemented; instead, a working group with representation from the universities, the institutes of technology and the HEA is developing a questionnaire which will be piloted in 2012/13 and implemented in full in 2013/14. The inclusion of a number of internationally standard questions will facilitate benchmarking against international higher education systems including, for example, those in the UK, the USA and Australia.

15.2 The President noted the lower placing than in previous years of the majority of Irish universities in the Times Higher Education/Thomson Reuters *World University Rankings 2011/12*. It is likely that a key influence on this is negative international perception of the Irish economy, which may have affected the responses to the reputational survey which forms a significant element of the placings. As yet, not all the data relating to the rankings have been made available; the President undertook to provide Academic Council with more detailed information when it is to hand.

Date of next meeting:

**Wednesday 14 December 2011
2.00 p.m. in AG01**

Signed: _____
President

Date: _____