

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES

Wednesday 13 April 2011

2.00-4.00 p.m. in AG01

PRESENT:

F Blin
S Blott
D Brabazon
O Bree
P Brereton
J Bruton
C Byrne
P J Byrne
J Carroll
B Casey
L Caul
M Clynes
J Connolly
J Costello
Y Delauré
J Dowling
J Doyle
I Farragher
M Farren
R Flynn
S Fox
N Gathergood
D Ging

D Gray
S Hashmi
C Holland
G Hughes
S Ingle
P James
M Kelly
B Kelly
J Kerrane
P Kinsella
M Kirwan
S Knowlton
J Loonam
L Looney
C Loscher
C Mac an Bhaird
B MacCraith (Chair)
L McDermott (Secretary)
C McDonagh
C McGonagle
A McGrady
D McMullin
M Molony

A Morrissey
M Munro
G Murphy
M Nic Giolla Mhichíl
E O'Connell
P Ó Flatharta
R O'Kennedy
E O'Riordan
M Parkinson
A Pearson-Evans
R Sadleir
A Scott (Deputy President/Registrar)
M Scott
P Sheehan
D Sinclair
A Sinnott
M Slowey
P Smith
M Smyth
A Stover
R Tobin
S Wickham
P Willis

APOLOGIES:

A Armstrong
L Barry
J Bosak
J Brunton
E Cuggy

B Flood
J Fox
E Guilfoyle
J Hughes
M Humphrys

P McMorrow
C Mac Murchaidh
M O'Connell
R O'Connor
J O'Hara

E Cunningham
B Daly
P Donnelly
T Draper
O Finlayson

A Leahy
C Long
B McConalogue
I McGlynn

J O'Higgins-Norman
B Pierce
D Reynolds
P Young

IN ATTENDANCE (for Item 7):

A McKenna

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of two submissions under Item 10.

A: Minutes and related issues

2. Minutes of the meeting of Academic Council of 9 February 2011

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising

3.1 With regard to the ITS Calculate programme, it was noted that some modifications, consequent upon changes to Marks and Standards as previously approved by Academic Council, would be made in time for the June 2011 Programme Board Examination Review Committees and Progression and Awards Boards, and that additional system enhancements were also planned within a slightly longer timeframe. (Item 3.1)

3.2 Noted that proposals on INTRA, including proposals relating to formal assessment procedures, had been discussed at two meetings of the Heads and Deans' group and were due for consideration at the meeting of the Education Committee of 4 May 2011. (Item 3.3)

3.3 Noted that the project plan with respect to the graduate attributes was being implemented on schedule (see also Item 6.3 below). The Deputy President/Registrar expressed appreciation to all staff who were contributing to the process of mapping the attributes against programme learning outcomes. (Item 3.4)

- 3.4** Noted that the working group on Teaching Quality Evaluation and Enhancement had been established, with Dr Joe O'Hara, Head of the School of Education Studies, as Chair, that its first meeting would take place shortly and that a brief progress report would be made to the meeting of the Education Committee of 4 May 2011. (Item 3.6)

4. Minutes of the meetings of the Education Committee of 12 January 2011 and 2 February 2011

Approved. With regard to the issue of Recognition of Prior Learning (mentioned in Item 3.1 of the minutes of both meetings), the Deputy President/Registrar noted that a staffing resource had been made available to manage the application process, though the level of resourcing might need to be increased in the event of a large volume of applications. The application system will be available from September 2011 with a view to admissions in 2011/12. She expressed appreciation to Dr Sheelagh Wickham, Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Science and Health, and Ms Valerie Cooke, Academic Affairs, for their work in relation to RPL. It was confirmed that the policy on RPL applies to all students and all programmes, including structured PhD programmes.

5. Minutes of the meeting of the University Standards Committee of 9 December 2010

Approved.

5.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 11 November 2010

Approved.

B: Policy and strategy issues

6. President's report

- 6.1** The President confirmed that the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 would be implemented, and that the implementation body, which includes one University President and the Chief Executive of the IUA, had begun to meet and had laid out a clear plan of action. There is likely to be a particular focus on the student experience, mode-independent student fees (equal treatment for part-time, full-time, on-campus and off-campus students), widening of access by a variety of means including online provision of programmes, and a new strategic dialogue between the HEA and higher education institutions which will include a focus on the alignment of their strategic priorities with national priorities.

- 6.2** With regard to the Employment Control Framework, a meeting between the university presidents and the Minister for Education and Skills is planned within the coming weeks. It would be desirable to obtain as much flexibility as is feasible within the Framework. The date against which staffing numbers are benchmarked is proposed to be 31 December 2008. Noted that the implementation of the Framework involves regular reporting on the part of the Human Resources Office and the Finance Office and that the financial decisions of institutions have to take account of their contingent liability for funding pensions.
- 6.3** A fruitful meeting took place between the President and representatives of the HEA, at which appreciation was expressed by the HEA of the University's distinctiveness of mission. The President noted current initiatives that are likely to enhance this distinctiveness as including the forthcoming recommendations of the Virtual and Online Learning Group, the ongoing work on the graduate attributes (see also Item 3.3 above) and the flexibility inherent in the Academic Framework for Innovation. Members of Council are requested to make their views known on the optimum student profile for the University (to be considered from a variety of perspectives including the financial perspective), as this issue is under consideration by the Senior Management Group.
- 6.4** The post of Dean of Graduate Studies (with responsibility for both taught and research programmes at Levels 9 and 10) has been approved by Executive. This role will replace the current role of Director of Graduate Research. Professor Gary Murphy will assume the role of Dean of Graduate Studies for the remainder of his term of office.
- 6.5** An appointment in the area of external and strategic affairs will be announced shortly.
- 6.6** Discussions in respect of the proposed strategic alliance with the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, which had undergone a slight interruption consequent on changes to senior personnel, have resumed their normal pace, and progress is being made.
- 6.7** The President noted that the current academic year had been a very challenging one, and expressed appreciation to the members of Council for their significant contributions in difficult circumstances and continuing to exemplify the University's characteristic dynamism.

7. Update on strategic student issues

7.1 CAO applications 2011

Ms Aisling McKenna made a presentation on this and the following two matters (Items 7.2 and 7.3), noting that, with respect to CAO applications, the situation was liable to undergo some change during the change-of-mind process in May and June 2011. Trends with respect to increased overall and first/second/third preferences for some programmes were noted.

7.2 First-year student experience survey 2010/11

Ms McKenna noted one of the aims of the survey as being the collection of information on how students experience the transition from second-level to higher education and the impact of this on the likelihood of their remaining on, and succeeding in, their chosen programmes (see also Item 7.3 below).

7.3 Student persistence and progression

7.3.1 Among the points noted in the discussion of this issue were the following:

- students who fall behind with their studies by virtue of missing lectures may tend to feel so overwhelmed that they see little point in resuming attendance
- financial pressure is often cited as a reason for considering withdrawing from the University, but less often cited as a reason for actually withdrawing
- a relatively high percentage of students perceived to be at risk of non-progression (39%) are registered for the programme of their first choice
- the perception by many students that feedback mechanisms are unsatisfactory mirrors that of students in the UK, as indicated in the National Student Survey; it was suggested that, in DCU, feedback on performance is more problematic with respect to continuous assessment than with respect to examinations
- it is essential to keep abreast of information on whom students turn to for advice (e.g. parents) and to ensure that appropriate information is made available to these sources
- interventions to assist students in withdrawing from a programme they find unsuitable, and where possible transferring to a suitable one, are very important.

7.3.2 Noted that the Education Committee was giving consideration to the development of a University Readiness Module (or equivalent initiative) as a means of supporting students. Additionally, each Faculty has a policy and procedures with respect to the provision of support for students deemed to be at risk.

7.3.3 The President thanked Ms McKenna for her contributions on all three of the above issues.

8. Revised draft *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*

8.1 Professor Gary Murphy, Director of Graduate Research, made a presentation on these regulations. In the ensuing discussion, it was noted that, for some Schools, difficulties might attach to identifying sufficient numbers of suitably-qualified academic staff to populate the proposed supervisory panels, though it was also suggested that not all members of a given panel need to be experts in the specific subject area of the thesis. It was agreed that the proposed wording in respect of the supervisory panel would benefit from revision to clarify the role and composition of the panel, and that this would be done. Among the issues that require clarification are the extent to which membership can be drawn from outside DCU, the extent to which the financial responsibilities of a Principal Investigator impact on his/her responsibilities as a member of a panel, the need to make appropriate references to the panel in the sections of the regulations that deal with annual progression, and the importance of ensuring that references to co-supervision are not worded negatively.

8.2 The draft regulations were approved subject to the modifications noted at Item 8.1 above and any other modifications consequent on final submissions to Professor Murphy by Council members (submissions to be made by 21 April 2011). It was agreed that the final version would be made available to Council on an electronic basis for final approval. It was noted, however, that the regulations should be regarded as being piloted for the academic year 2011/12 and that, if in the course of the year it emerged that further revision was needed, this would be carried out.

8.3 The President expressed appreciation to Professor Murphy for his very significant work in developing the revised regulations.

C: Items for formal approval/noting

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

Approved.

9. Validation recommendations**9.1 Certificate in Nurse/Midwife Prescribing**

Approved.

9.2 BA in Procurement and Supply Management

Approved.

10. Any other business

10.1 The Deputy President/Registrar noted that documentation for the Education Committee and (with the exception of external examiner nomination forms) the University Standards Committee is now made available electronically (by means of Google Docs) rather than in paper form. She asked the members of Council to give consideration to the desirability, or otherwise, of doing the same with regard to documentation for Council meetings, noting that the issue would be raised again at the meeting of 8 June 2011.

10.2 The Deputy President/Registrar noted that the programme-level student survey would shortly be conducted, and expressed appreciation to Ms Aisling McKenna, Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, and the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education for the preparatory work they had done in relation to this survey.

Date of next meeting:

**Wednesday 8 June 2011
2.00 p.m. in AG01**

Signed: _____
President

Date: _____