

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 3 May 2017

2.00 – 3.30 pm in A204

Present: Dr Jennifer Bruen, Professor Eithne Guilfoyle (Chair), Mr Billy Kelly, Dr Anne Looney, Professor Lisa Looney, Dr Garrett McGuinness, Ms Aisling McKenna

Apologies: Dr Claire Bohan, Professor Mark Brown, Professor Michelle Butler, Professor John Doyle, Professor Greg Hughes, Ms Margaret Irwin-Bannon, Ms Pauline Mooney, Professor Anne Sinnott, Dr Joseph Stokes

In attendance: Dr Greg Foley (for Items 8 and 9)
Ms Louise McDermott

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the addition of one submission under Item 11.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 5 April 2017

The minutes were approved subject to the deletion of all the wording following ‘... to circulate for agreement.’ from Item 11.1.

It was agreed that they would be signed by the Chair outside the context of the meeting, following the modification to wording outlined above.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of 5 April 2017

- 3.1** It was noted that the development of a protocol for the cessation of arrangements with those external examiners who do not engage in the examining process was under way and that a draft of this protocol would be submitted for the consideration of the Education Committee at its meeting of 31 May 2017. (Item 3.1)
- 3.2** It was noted that the review of best practice with respect to the publication of First Destination Survey outcomes was under way and that proposals would be submitted for the consideration of the Education Committee in due course. (Item 3.3)
- 3.3** With respect to English-language requirements for applicants to programmes in PNU awarded by DCU, the following wording was approved:

DCU has gained several years of experience in running programmes at PNU, and the scope of partnership has extended to become multi-Faculty. In this context Education Committee agrees that subject to the satisfaction of the relevant DCU partner Faculty, some limited flexibility may be applied by PNU in assessing applicants' standard of English for admission to DCU programmes. This applies in cases where there is not external accredited evidence of a standard equivalent to IELTS 6.5. When invoking this consideration, PNU must put appropriate English language supports in place for students for whom they are found to be necessary, so that they can successfully engage with the programme (Item 11.1).

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION/NOTING

4. Update on strategic activities undertaken within the Irish Universities Association (IUA)

- 4.1** The Chair reported on the following items, which had been discussed by the IUA Registrars at their meeting of 10 April 2017:
- the Registrars intend to share information about the experience of the universities in engaging with the revised Garda vetting mechanisms
 - the Department of Education and Skills is considering the possibility of allowing non- EU graduates of Level 9 programmes to work in Ireland for a minimum of two years post-graduation provided they earn a salary of at least €27,000; if this is allowed, it will be possible for the universities to include reference to it in marketing materials
 - the HEAR and DARE schemes have been fully subsumed into the CAO system; the CAO is bearing most of the cost and therefore the HE institutions will pay a reduced fee for the operation of the schemes from 2017

- the Registrars are to form a subgroup to discuss and make recommendations on issues relating to Brexit
- the Registrars have been asked to consult their colleagues in the universities about how well, or otherwise, it is felt plagiarism is being dealt with; particular attention is to be paid to the issue of students selling assignments, inside or outside their own institutions; Registrars are then to report outcomes to the IUA.

4.2 Ms McKenna reported on the following items, which had been discussed by the IUA Directors of Quality at their meeting of 10 April 2017:

- QQI will shortly make available a handbook for providers to guide the preparation for institutional reviews
- QQI intend to publish the institutional annual quality reports in their entirety; though some institutions have expressed reservations about this, it is likely that DCU will find it helpful for benchmarking purposes
- QQI recently made available their response to the annual dialogue meeting, last held with DCU in November 2016; they have, however, indicated that this dialogue meeting will not be organised in 2017.

5. Report on the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE)

5.1 Mr Kelly noted that the fieldwork for the 2016/17 exercise had just been completed. The number of responses, at approximately 36,000, represents a 5% increase over the 2015/16 exercise, and 20 out of the 27 relevant institutions had experienced an increase. DCU had not, but still had a high level of responses. Institutional-level data is to be made available very shortly.

5.2 In line with the experience of other countries, such as Australia, responses and outcomes are tending to become more positive as institutions engage with the issues raised by students.

5.3 With respect to the possibility of institutional-level data being made publicly available and notwithstanding some reservations that have been expressed about these data potentially being seen out of context, a draft reporting template has been circulated for the consideration of the university Registrars.

5.4 A group has been convened to consider the possibility of extending the survey to research students. The DCU representatives on this group are Dr Joseph Stokes, Dean of Graduate Studies, and Ms Rachel Keegan, Senior Graduate Studies Administrator.

6. Education Committee Goals/Strategic Planning

The Chair noted that both Education Committee and the Teaching and Learning thematic working group had provided input into the Teaching and Learning elements of the forthcoming new strategic plan. The outcome of their deliberations had been forwarded to the President's Office in the week beginning 24 April 2017, and a copy had been circulated both to Education Committee and to the members of the Teaching and Learning thematic working group. She noted that EC members could make the various outcomes available to stakeholders provided the current status of these outcomes was made clear.

7. Accelerated validation process

7.1 In the course of discussion of the proposals with respect to this, the following points were made:

- it would be desirable to distinguish more clearly than has been done to date between the types of information to be elicited in respect of the types of proposal referred to (i.e. those relating to potential strategic alliances and those relating to Erasmus+ funding applications)
- with respect to potential strategic alliances, it would be necessary to elicit information about programme philosophy, overall coherence and learning outcomes
- terms such as 'strategic relationship' are potentially unclear; tighter definitions may be needed
- with respect to Erasmus+ funding applications, the focus in documentation should be on financial issues
- where programme proposers consider that a proposed Erasmus+ partner is anxious that they deviate from agreed University procedures, immediate contact should be made with Academic Affairs
- proposal templates already approved by the EC should be leveraged for use in the accelerated validation process (e.g. that relating to collaborative academic offerings: offsite/distance delivery - EC2016/A4/8 refers - and that relating to collaborative academic offerings: joint taught award - EC2016/A9/10a/b refers); with respect to the latter, for example, the template elicits considerable information about the division of responsibilities which, while not necessarily requiring to be discussed in detail by the EC, would none the less be necessary information for the EC to have
- consideration needs to be given to QQI core guideline documentation, with particular reference to (a) the need for alignment between institutional and local strategic priorities and (b) the learner experience
- it would be useful to make clear to the University community which office houses the definitive documentation with respect to both types of proposal.

7.2 It was agreed that further discussion would take place outside the context of the EC with respect to the proposed accelerated validation process with a view to a revised proposal being submitted to the EC.

8. Annual Programme Reviews: Faculty reports

8.1 It was noted that the report from DCU Connected would be made available to the 31 May 2017 meeting of the EC and that the first report from DCU Institute of Education would be made available in May 2018, following consolidation of procedures in the Institute.

8.2 The reports to hand were noted. The following points were noted in discussion:

- in some instances, several months had passed since the completion of the APR, and some of the issues identified had been addressed/resolved by now
- issues relating to the marketing of taught postgraduate programmes tend to feature frequently in reports, and a focused approach to addressing these will be particularly important in light of Brexit
- another issue often mentioned, and which would benefit from being addressed at University level, relates to interactions with external examiners
- engagement with the APR process is much more positive than it was when the system was introduced; the benefits have become apparent over time, the revised form was well received and the use of GURU facilitates administration.

8.3 With respect to external examiners' requests for statistical information, it was noted that it would be possible to give them access to GURU where this was considered by Faculties to be potentially useful.

8.4 With respect to students' abilities in Mathematics and with particular reference to the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, it was noted that the effect, if any, of the revised points system, which raises the Leaving Certificate Higher Level requirement, will be monitored.

8.6 It was noted that some issues remained to be resolved with respect to the Periodic Programme Review process. Ms McKenna noted the importance of alignment between the PPR and the APR processes, with particular reference to the institutional review due to take place in late 2018. The importance of monitoring this issue of alignment over the coming months was noted.

- 8.7** The Chair noted that, in line with usual practice, she would submit a report on the University-level APR outcomes to Executive.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

9. Validation proposal: MSc in Advanced Nursing (PNU)

- 9.1** The proposal was approved.
- 9.2** Dr Foley undertook to confirm the locus of the decision-making in respect of admissions.
- 9.3** With respect to the proposed membership of the Accreditation Board it was noted that, because in two instances two people from the same institution had been nominated, the programme proposers would be requested to invite only one of these people, in each instance, to join the Board. This is to ensure compliance with the regulations about the appointment of members of Accreditation Boards.
- 9.4** The following issues were noted in discussion:
- the award is to be made by DCU, notwithstanding any additional documentation that PNU might wish to give students or graduates, such as certificates of attendance
 - no particular logistical or cultural issues are expected to arise in the context of the clinical placements
 - the proportion of credits which the dissertation attracts is necessarily low because the programme is a practice-based one and students are not expected to conduct independent research for the dissertation.

10. Change to title of LLM

- 10.1** It was agreed to refer the proposal on this matter back to the School and Faculty with a request to submit a revised proposal based on a comprehensive review of practice vis-à-vis nomenclature in Ireland and internationally, as the current proposal did not appear to offer advantages in terms of clarity or marketability.
- 10.2** The importance of reviewing the title as it appeared on parchments given to the first cohort of graduates from the programme in March 2017, once a revised title had been agreed, was noted.

11. Any other business

The Chair noted that she and Ms Mooney were reviewing the Academic Calendar with particular reference to potential significant changes, that she was also in discussion about the matter with the Senior Management Group, and that she intended to place this item on the agenda of the 31 May 2017 meeting of the EC.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chair

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday, 31 May 2017 at 2.00 in A204
