

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 1 March 2012

9.00-10.30 a.m. in A204

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Dermot Brabazon, Ms Olivia Bree, Ms Jennifer Bruton, Ms Bernadette Dowling, Dr Jean Hughes, Mr Billy Kelly, Professor Conor Long, Dr Lisa Looney, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Ms Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Ms Barbara McConalogue, Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Dr Anne Morrissey, Dr Sheelagh Wickham

Apologies: Ms Annabella Stover, Mr Ronan Tobin

In attendance: Ms Gráinne Curran

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of one submission under Item 6.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 26 January 2012

The minutes were confirmed subject to the replacement of the wording of Item 6.2.1 by the following:

Approved. Agreed that, in the event of a student on the BEng/BSc in Manufacturing Engineering with Business Studies being unaware of the revision and acting on the basis of the original programme regulations, a lenient approach should be adopted.

They were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Noted that a meeting between the Chair, the President, Dr Joe O’Hara, Head of the School of Education Studies, Dr Pádraig Walsh, Chief Executive Officer of the NQAI, and Mr Lewis Purser, Director of Academic Affairs in the IUA, would take place on 5 March 2012. The aim of this meeting is to resolve the legacy issues with respect to the NFQ level appropriate for the Graduate Diploma in Education (now the Professional Diploma in Education). (Item 3.2)
- 3.2** It was noted that the Working Group on Non-Major Awards was continuing its work on the basis of the recommendations of the Education Committee. (Item 3.4)
- 3.3** It was noted that proposals on English-language requirements would be discussed by the Graduate Studies Board at its meeting of 3 May 2012 and that the progress of research students who had registered without having met such requirements would be ascertained. (Item 3.5)
- 3.4** The online system for external examiners’ reports will be tested shortly (the original timeline had to be adjusted to allow ISS to prioritise the upgrading of the Agresso finance system.) External examiners will be notified of the new system later in March, when they are sent the schedule for the June 2012 Progression and Awards Boards; then, in April, they will get the URL that will allow them to access the system, along with training materials. The system will be live from mid-April, and training will be provided for Heads of School and other stakeholders. A document outlining the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders has been drafted and is being considered by the working group. Updated information will be made available to a future Heads’ and Deans’ meeting. (Item 3.6)
- 3.5** It was noted that updated information arising from a School’s response to external examiner observations would be made available to the USC at its meeting of 12 April 2012. (Item 3.16)
- 3.6** Local policies on Recognition of Prior Learning are being collected in light of the University-wide policy, and further action will be planned once this task has been completed. A portion of the time of an administrative member of staff has been allocated to working on RPL issues. It will be necessary to provide both training for University staff in relation to interviewing RPL candidates (using a competency framework) and tutorial support for potential applicants. (Item 3.18)
- 3.7** It was noted that a range of issues relating to graduate research was under discussion. (Item 4)

- 3.8** Noted that clarification in respect of the modules to be examined by a nominated external examiner, and the duration of the appointment, had been obtained and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.2.1)
- 3.9** Noted that clarification as to the proposed role of a nominated external examiner (whether programme examiner or module examiner) had been obtained and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.2.2.)
- 3.10** Noted that the versions of Marks and Standards and the associated FAQs containing revised and updated wording had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 8 February 2012 and that these versions would apply from 1 March 2012. Agreed that the working group on Marks and Standards could be kept on standby, possibly on the basis of a rolling membership, in case of future need, but that it would be important not to allow an assumption to take hold that M&S were liable to change on an ongoing basis. Agreed none the less that two sections, 5.1.2 and 7.1, would need discussion in the near term on the basis of issues that had been raised in relation to them. Agreed that M&S should be a standing item on the first meeting of the USC of each academic year. (Items 7.1.2, 7.1.3, 7.1.4 and 7.1.5)
- 3.11** Noted that Ms Bruton had met with Ms Gillian Barry and Ms Celine Jameson of the Registry to formulate recommendations in respect of module exemptions. It had been agreed that, where a student transfers into a programme, credits from modules taken in the original programme would be counted as credits within the new programme and the marks obtained in such modules would count in terms of the calculation of the precision mark in the relevant year(s) of the new programme. Discussions on this issue are in progress with ITS. It was agreed that the student record would not be altered to reflect the inclusion of the credits on the new programme but, rather, the credits and marks would be evidenced on the transcript from the original programme. (Item 7.2)
- 3.12** Noted that the form to be used to request re-admission of legacy candidates had been updated to allow for confirmation that no previous request had been submitted. (Item 8.1)
- 3.13** It was noted that revised proposals on re-admission of legacy candidates would be submitted by the Faculty of Engineering and Computing for the consideration of the USC at its meeting of 12 April 2012. (Item 8.2)
- 3.14** With regard to the discussions in Faculties about communication and engagement with external examiners, it was noted that a number of themes had been selected for particular consideration. The issue, originally due for consideration again by the USC at its 12 April 2012 meeting, may in fact be considered now at its 7 June 2012 meeting. (Item 9)

- 3.15** Ms Bruton noted that the working group on feedback to students (the membership of which includes student Faculty Convenors) planned to hold its final meeting by the beginning of April 2012. The Faculty Convenors will, meantime, conduct a survey of student opinion on the issue. The School of Education Studies representative on the working group had mentioned that it would be logical to develop a policy on assessment prior to developing a policy on feedback. The importance of rational scheduling of assessments was noted, as was the availability within the University of a wide range of resources on assessment and the likelihood that the ongoing development of QuEST (Quality Enhancement and Survey of Teaching) would complement the development of the policies. It was noted that feedback on learning, as well as on assessment, is important. It was agreed that the Chair would discuss with Dr Looney how best to disseminate the outcomes of an initiative undertaken in the School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering with a view to ensuring a coherent framework for incremental learning from Year 1 to Year 4; the model developed to facilitate this initiative was noted as being an example of the exploitation of technology to compensate for scarce staff resources, something that would become increasingly important into the future. It was also agreed that the Chair would follow up with Dr Brabazon in respect of a feedback model used in the University of Manchester. It was agreed that Professor Long would e-mail the Chair to elaborate on his concerns about the level of University support offered to in-module as distinct from end-of-module assessment. (Item 10.2)
- 3.16** The Chair noted that the feedback requested by the Teaching Council on their recent recommendations about a range of issues relating to initial teacher education had been collated and submitted to the Council by the due date of 29 February 2012. On behalf of the USC, she expressed appreciation to Ms Nic Giolla Mhichíl and her colleagues across the University for their very significant work on this issue. It was noted that considerable work can be generated for Schools on the basis of individual requests from graduates for details of curricula dating back some years, which they need in order to fulfil Teaching Council requirements in terms of coverage of disciplinary areas. It is hoped that, as discussions with the Council progress and agreement is reached on the current issues, it may be possible to propose a policy in relation to such requirements which would minimise work and avoid duplication of effort for all concerned; it was noted that it would be important to maintain oversight of this issue with a view to resolution at a suitable time. It was noted that a joint working group had been set up by the IUA Registrars and the Teaching Council with a view to resolving the current issues, and that Dr James O'Higgins-Norman of the School of Education Studies was a member; the Chair undertook to keep the USC apprised of the progress of the work of this group. It was noted that Dr Joe O'Hara, Head of the School of Education Studies, is now a member of the Council and that Dr Andy McGrady, Director of Mater Dei Institute of Education, is also a member in the capacity of representative of a group

of colleges of education. A briefing note from Dr O'Hara had been circulated to the USC. (Item 11.1)

- 3.17** It was noted, with regard to examination papers containing multiple-choice questions, that such papers exist in relation to twenty-eight modules, evenly spread across Dublin City University Business School, the Faculty of Engineering and Computing and the Faculty of Science and Health. Ms McMorrow is to liaise with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education about the possibility of making some of these papers unavailable on line, to minimise the risk that students might become overly familiar with the questions, and there will then be discussion at Faculty level. The outcome of this discussion will be made available to the USC at its meeting of 7 June 2012. (Item 12)

SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES

4.1 Appointment of external examiners

- 4.1.1 Professor Simon du Plock, Metanoia Institute, London
MSc in Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy
Approved subject to clarification as to whether the nominee is to be a programme or a module examiner. Agreed that the possibility of having the same external examiner for this programme and the Doctorate in Psychotherapy would be discussed by the School of Nursing.
- 4.1.2 Dr Cathal Heavey, University of Limerick
BEng and BSc/MSc in Manufacturing Engineering with Business Studies
Approved subject to clarification as to whether the nominee is to be a programme or a module examiner.
- 4.1.3 Professor Hormoz Farhat, Trinity College Dublin (Emeritus)
All DCU-awarded Level 8 and Level 9 programmes in the Royal Irish Academy of Music
Approved. Noted that issues had arisen in respect of the procedure by which the nomination had been made and that these issues, as well as a range of other issues, were being discussed with the RIAM. Noted that the comparator institutions vis-à-vis the RIAM were all overseas and that, accordingly, it would generally be expected that the RIAM would source external examiners overseas.

Agreed that consideration could be given to specifying that, where a nominated external examiner had retired, there should be a time limit (e.g. five years) on the period post retirement within which a nomination could be considered.

4.2 Renewal of appointment of external examiners, and/or changes to duties

- 4.2.1 Dr Rose Malone, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Doctorate in Education, Education Department, St Patrick's College
Approved.

5. Other issues

No items.

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)

No items.

6. Any other business

With regard to the addition of wording to the annual external examiner report form to elicit a view on the extent to which learning outcomes are being achieved, it was agreed that there should be a heading to cover learning outcomes generally, another to cover specific learning outcomes, and a third to cover mark distribution. Agreed that Mr Kelly and Dr Looney would discuss these issues in order to agree a wording, and that this wording would be submitted to the USC for consideration on an electronic basis.

Date of next meeting:

**12 April 2012
9.00 a.m. in A204**

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____