

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 9 December 2010

10.00 a.m.-12.00 midday in CG20, Henry Grattan Building

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Françoise Blin,
Dr Dermot Brabazon, Ms Olivia Bree, Ms Jennifer Bruton,
Mr Cillian Byrne, Ms Bernadette Dowling,
Professor Saleem Hashmi, Mr Billy Kelly, Ms Louise McDermott
(Secretary), Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Dr Anne Morrissey,
Professor Gary Murphy, Mr Paul Sheehan, Dr Sheelagh Wickham

Apologies: Ms Morag Munro, Ms Annabella Stover, Mr Ronan Tobin

**In attendance
(for Item 8.1):** Mr Ian Bell

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes of the meetings of 30 September 2010 and 4 November 2010

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1.1 Noted, in relation to the NFQ level appropriate for conversion Graduate Diplomas, that the IUA had confirmed that no sector-wide definition of such a qualification existed and that it was the responsibility of each institution to define its own qualifications as such, as appropriate. The Chair noted that this issue of NFQ level was likely to be discussed again by the IUA Registrars' Group, particularly in view

of the recent recommendation made to the Group that concurrent and consecutive teacher education programmes be placed at Level 8. (Item 3.1)

- 3.2 Noted that discussions with Faculties about the placing of post-1989 (i.e. DCU) qualifications on the NFQ would be progressed in due course. (Item 3.1)
- 3.3 Noted that the draft revised *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* would be on the agenda of the meeting of the USC of 3 February 2010 following final consultation with the members of the Graduate Studies Board and final revisions, and that they would include more detailed procedures in relation to appeals than exist in the current regulations. (Item 3.2)
- 3.4 Noted that discussions about the fitness for purpose of the ‘mother’ and ‘child’ module system were in progress. (Item 3.3)
- 3.5 The paper outlining the arrangements in respect of fees for students undertaking an extended academic session was noted. (Item 3.6)
- 3.6 Noted that Mr Byrne had made a presentation on the fees implications of Marks and Standards to the Heads’ meeting of 18 November 2010 and had invited comments, and that these implications would be kept under review. (Item 3.7)
- 3.7 Noted that the implications for Oscail students of the policy on leave of absence were being monitored, and that it was possible that a derogation for Oscail students in respect of the stipulation that leave of absence can be granted only following a deferral might need to be requested. The Chair and Ms McMorrow are to liaise with Oscail on the issue with a view to ascertaining the desirability of having a request on this basis submitted to the USC for consideration at its meeting of 3 February 2010. (Item 3.8)
- 3.8 Noted that the recommendation of Academic Council in respect of shared teaching of Level 8 and Level 9 modules is that no change should be made to current practice. (Item 3.9)
- 3.9 With respect to two matters, guidelines for the supervision of projects and marking grids, the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education noted that they had circulated a paper, including examples, for discussion at Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees and had also made it available to Programme Chairs. There appears to be a significant level both of adherence to supervision guidelines and of use of marking grids. However, it is important that student representatives highlight any problems that emerge in relation to these areas so that they can be addressed as soon as possible. It was agreed that the Associate Deans would send the documentation to Mr Seamus Fox, Academic Director of Oscail, so that he could share it with colleagues. (Items 3.10 and 3.11)

- 3.10** Noted that the Memorandum of Understanding between the University and the Royal Irish Academy of Music had been signed by the University and was due to be signed by the Academy, and that it was an interim one designed to be reviewed after one year and then, if appropriate at that time, replaced by a longer-term one (though this too would be subject to ongoing review). The existence of the MoU may well foster closer collaboration between the two institutions. Noted that it is the University, and not the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, that has the legal relationship with the Academy. Noted that the MoU allows for access to DCU Library by students of the Academy, in so far as they are also registered students of DCU, and that it does not allow for staff access to DCU Library by staff of the Academy. (Item 3.12)
- 3.11** Noted that, in two cases, alternative external examiners to those originally nominated were being sought. (Items 3.13 and 3.18)
- 3.12** Noted that a Programme Board was giving consideration to alternative marking mechanisms for 2011/12 and beyond. (Item 3.21)
- 3.13** Noted that a draft policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning had been circulated for discussion in Faculties and that it was expected that an updated policy would be submitted for consideration by the USC at its meeting of 3 February 2010, following receipt of the feedback from this discussion and also the report of the NQAI Framework Implementation Network on the issue. The Chair noted that it was likely that the report of the Strategic Review of Higher Education, which is expected to be published soon, would contain a specific recommendation on the issue in the light of the expected doubling of numbers in higher education over the next twenty years, with a concomitant increase in the numbers of mature students. (Item 3.24)
- 3.14** Noted that testing of the PAC system for research student applications was in progress and that it was expected that the system would go live at the beginning of 2011. The Chair thanked the members of the PAC working group for having progressed these developments within the University. There is ongoing sector-wide discussion about the application fee with a view to ascertaining the feasibility of allowing an applicant to pay one fee for multiple applications to the same institution and allowing overseas applicants to pay one fee only, as appropriate. It was noted that it is intended that the DCU postgraduate research forms, in their entirety, will be streamlined as appropriate and made available on line. (Item 4.3)
- 3.15** Noted that a list of the final-year modules to be examined by an external examiner had been obtained, and that the nomination had therefore been approved. (Item 5.1.5)

- 3.16** In the case of two external examiners, it was noted that confirmation had been obtained that the nominees were in a position to act (given their other work commitments), and that the nominations had therefore been approved. (Items 5.1.6 and 5.1.8)
- 3.17** Noted that clarification had been obtained about an issue mentioned on the nomination form for an external examiner, and that the nomination had therefore been approved. (Item 5.1.9)
- 3.18** Noted that clarification had been obtained about the implications of students having to repeat an academic session where a programme is offered in alternate sessions only. (Item 7 from 30/09/10 and Item 3.1 from 04/11/10)
- 3.19** Noted that the issues raised, at the meeting of 30 September, in respect of the policy on *aegrotat* awards to students on taught programmes were the subject of ongoing discussion and that proposals on them would be made to the USC at its meeting of 3 February 2011. (Item 9)
- 3.20** Noted that further discussions would take place, in 2011, about a number of issues relating to Bologna compliance and that recommendations arising from these discussions would be made to the USC as and when appropriate. (Subgroup 1, Items 1.2 and 1.4)
- 3.21** Noted that a request from Dublin City University Business School that a student be allowed to complete Year 3 of the BA in Accounting and Finance over two years, on the basis of medical recommendations, and that the examinations for the 30 credits to be attempted in 2010/11 should be spread between the Summer and the Autumn sittings had been approved by Chair's action on 30 September 2010.
- 3.22** Noted that Mr David Clarke of the European Commission had been approved as external examiner for translation modules in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies for the period 2010/11-2012/13 and that the approval process had been carried out electronically and completed on 15 November 2010.
- 3.23** Noted that Professor Mark Taylor of the University of Southampton had been approved as external examiner for the BEng/MEng in Biomedical Engineering for the period 2010/11-2012/13 and that the approval process had been carried out electronically and completed on 19 November 2010.
- 4. Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 2 September 2010**

Approved.

SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES

5.1 Appointment of external examiners

- 5.1.1 Professor Kenneth Wolfe, Trinity College Dublin
Modules in the School of Biotechnology
Approved.
- 5.1.2 Professor Ann-Marie Ward, University of Ulster
Modules in Accounting in Dublin City University Business School
Approved.
- 5.1.3 Professor Gregory Connor, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Graduate Certificate in Corporate Treasury, MSc in Corporate Finance,
MSc in Investment, Treasury and Banking
Approved.
- 5.1.4 Mr Nicholas Fennell, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick
BA in Media Production Management
Approved.
- 5.1.5 Dr Deirdre Brennan, University of Ulster
BSc in Physical Education with Biology
Approved.
- 5.1.6 Dr Julia Walsh, University College Dublin
BSc in Physical Education with Biology
Approved.
- 5.1.7 Professor Javaid Rehman, Brunel University
Modules in Law in the School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 5.1.8 Dr Leslie Fletcher, Liverpool John Moores University
Modules in Oscail
Approved.
- 5.1.9 Dr Paul Conway, University College Cork
Certificate in Education and Diploma in Education, St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.1.10 Dr Gerry Mac Ruairc, University College Dublin
Doctorate in Education, St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.1.11 Dr Richard Hull, National University of Ireland, Galway
MA in Ethics, Mater Dei Institute of Education and DCU
Approved.
- 5.1.12 Professor Edward Larrissey, Queen's University Belfast
MA in Poetry Studies, Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.
- 5.1.13 Dr Adrian Mario Gellel, University of Malta

MA in Applied Christian Spirituality, All Hallows College
Approved.

- 5.1.14 Dr Stijm Vanheule, Ghent University
MSc in Psychotherapy and Doctorate in Psychotherapy
Approved.

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

- 5.2.1 Dr George McClelland, University of Limerick
Modules the Schools of Education Studies, Chemical Sciences, Mathematical Sciences and Physical Sciences
Approved.
- 5.2.2 Dr Ben Clift, University of Warwick
BA in Economics, Politics and Law
Approved.
- 5.2.3 Professor Tom Gallagher, University of Bradford
MA in International Relations, MA in Development, MA in Security and Conflict Studies
Approved.
- 5.2.4 Professor Stephen Matterson, Trinity College Dublin
Modules in English on the Bachelor of Religious Education programme, Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.

The Chair noted that an external examiner had brought to her attention his concern about the possibility that local procedures for addressing plagiarism might not be best served by the overall university policy on the issue. She has invited him to enlarge on his comments and is awaiting his response.

The Chair noted the undesirability of submitting nomination forms late and the fact that such forms are accepted only in certain specified circumstances (Item 3.1 of the minutes of the USC of 1 October 2009 refers).

6. Other issues

Dublin City University Business School

- 6.1 Procedures to be used in respect of external examiners on the MSc in Organisational Change and Leadership Development, jointly offered with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland**

Noted.

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**6.2 Request for a change to examination regulations in respect of modules in the School of Law and Government**

Approved.

Faculty of Science and Health**6.3 Transfer arrangements for continuing students – MSc in Psychotherapy**

Noted. Noted that some of the students would be graduating with the Graduate Diploma in Psychotherapy as an exit award.

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)**7. Marks and Standards****7.1 Action following the additional USC meeting of 4 November 2010**

7.1.1 The three changes proposed to the wording of Marks and Standards, to clarify issues that had arisen, were approved. They will be circulated electronically to Academic Council with a request for approval.

7.1.2 It was agreed that an addition should be made to the advisory document to accompany Marks and Standards, on the basis of the wording proposed, to cover the issue of calculating the precision mark for students carrying failed modules, previous year/subject contributions and/or alternative modules. The relevant section of Marks and Standards is 7.1. It was noted that the information about this issue now to be given in the advisory document carries resource implications because it will entail changes to the ITS Calculate programme.

7.1.3 It was agreed that an addition should be made to the advisory document, on the basis of the wording proposed subject to the inclusion of the word 'additional' before the word 'repeat' in the formulation of the question. The relevant section of Marks and Standards is 7.1.6.

7.1.4 It was agreed that an addition should be made to the advisory document, on the basis of the wording proposed subject to the inclusion of the word 'overall' before 'performance' at the end of the first sentence in the response.

- 7.1.5** It was agreed that an addition should be made to the advisory document to indicate what information about a student a Progression and Awards Board may take into account when making decisions. Ms McMorrow will draft the wording and circulate it electronically to the USC for comment.
- 7.1.6** It was agreed that advisory documentation should take the form of one consolidated document only and that proliferation of documentation should be avoided. It was agreed that, in principle, the document could be made available to staff and students, but not people external to the University, provided the President, Professor Brian MacCraith, was in agreement with this and it was technically feasible. The Chair is to discuss the matter with Professor MacCraith, and Ms McMorrow is to investigate the technical feasibility.
- 7.1.7** With respect to the issue of continuous assessment resits, it was agreed in relation to the wording of category one (where a resit is available for all components of a module) that the words ‘and taken as a resit’ should be removed from the sentence at the third bullet point and placed into a footnote, with a view to making the bullet point more immediately relevant to the type of situation which is most likely to arise. It was agreed not to include continuous assessment resit information in programme regulations on the basis that, from 2011/12, it will be readable from the assessment tab on Coursebuilder and (as noted at 7.1.6 above), documentation should be streamlined to the extent possible. It was agreed that each Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning/Education would draw up and circulate a Faculty-specific memorandum outlining the position with regard to the management of continuous assessment resits, identifying the arrangements as interim, would submit a copy to Ms McDermott and would communicate with module co-ordinators about the importance of notifying students of the arrangements. It was further agreed that the information would be placed on the web adjacent to programme-specific information.
- 7.2 Request from the Director of Graduate Research for a derogation from Section 3.1.1 (with respect to 2.5-credit modules)**

The request for a derogation so as to allow 2.5-credit modules (made available either by DCU or by other institutions participating in joint research programmes) to be made available where they form part of a suite of Graduate Training Elements was approved subject to the stipulation that it apply only to existing 2.5-credit modules and that no new 2.5-credit modules be created. It was agreed that Professor Murphy would convey this information to the Graduate Studies Board and also convey to the GSB the concern of the USC at the continuing existence of these modules as GTEs notwithstanding the fact that they no longer exist on a University-wide basis. It was noted that a separate discussion needs to take place

about the attribution of credits to other forms of active contribution on the part of research students.

8. External examiners

8.1 Procedures for communicating and responding to examiners' recommendations

8.1.1 The proposals made by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education to modify the current procedures, and the responses from Registry, Information Systems and Services and the Faculty of Science and Health, were noted. It was agreed that whatever procedures were ultimately agreed would need to be underpinned by a robust online database, that this should be as simple as possible to operate and that resource considerations needed to be taken into account when it was being devised. It was noted, however, that the proposals made provision for manual rather than online procedures at one point. It was noted too that, notwithstanding the absence of the online database, the current procedures appeared to be working well. The importance of ensuring a manageable workload for Heads of School, whatever the final procedures, was noted.

8.1.2 It was agreed to expand the membership of the current working group on this issue to ensure that all Faculties and Oscail were represented and that a Head of School, a Programme Chair, and individuals with specific roles such as Teaching Convenor and Subject Leader, were included. It was noted that Dr Blin and Ms Bruton would represent the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education on the group. It was agreed that the group would ensure that the University of Limerick was consulted on the issues, as UL has recently set up an online system for communicating and responding to external examiners' recommendations and it appears to be working well. The group will also ensure that the precise role of the Programme Chair in relation to these issues will be defined.

8.2 Revised appointment regulations

Approved, in the context of the revision and consolidation of all the regulations and guidelines pertaining to external examiners, apart from the regulations and guidelines which are being dealt with under 8.1 above and are therefore still the subject of discussion. These, once finalised and approved, will need to be included in the general regulations and guidelines.

9. Marks and Standards 2010/11 from St Patrick's College

Noted.

10. Any other business

- 10.1** Noted that the present meeting had had to be rescheduled from 2 December 2010 because the University had been closed that day on account of adverse weather conditions.
- 10.2** Agreed that the fitness for purpose of the new system of making the majority of papers for USC meetings available in electronic format would be kept under review.
- 10.3** The Chair noted that it might be necessary to hold an additional meeting in the first half of 2011 on account of pressure of business.

Date of next meeting:

**3 February 2011
9.00 a.m. in A204**

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____