

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 15 September 2011

9.00-11.10 a.m. in A204

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Françoise Blin,
Dr Dermot Brabazon, Ms Olivia Bree, Ms Jennifer Bruton,
Mr Cillian Byrne, Ms Bernadette Dowling, Mr Billy Kelly,
Professor Conor Long, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary),
Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Dr Anne Morrissey, Ms Morag Munro,
Ms Annabella Stover, Dr Sheelagh Wickham

Apologies: Ms Barbara McConalogue, Professor Gary Murphy,
Mr Ronan Tobin

The Chair welcomed Professor Conor Long to his first meeting of the University Standards Committee, noting that he had replaced Professor Saleem Hashmi as representative of the Heads of School. On behalf of the USC, she expressed appreciation both to Professor Hashmi and to Dr Blin, whose term of office has also come to a close, for their significant contribution to the USC during their terms as members.

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 26 May 2011

The minutes, which had been approved electronically on 15 June 2011, were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Noted that the IUA Registrars' Group had agreed the title 'Professional Diploma in Education' for the conversion programmes in teaching (which are at Level 8) from 2011/12 until the replacement of such programmes by Master's conversion programmes. Noted that the Chair would mention to the Registrars' Group, at its October 2011 meeting, the observations made by the Colleges of Education about this new title. (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, following consideration of current issues relating to the NFQ and once the merging of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland with other institutions had taken place. (Item 3.2)
- 3.3** Noted that sector-wide discussions about the management of the PAC application fee would take place in due course but that other PAC-related issues were being prioritised at present. (Item 3.4)
- 3.4** Noted that future presentations by the chairs of the Disciplinary Committee and the Appeals Board would be scheduled in a way that allowed adequate time for discussion. (Item 3.6)
- 3.5** Noted that a response was awaited from an external examiner in respect of observations he had made about the University's policy on plagiarism. (Item 3.7)
- 3.6** Noted that the changes to the ITS Calculate programme which had been due for implementation before the June 2011 Programme Board Examination Review Committee and Progression and Awards Board meetings had been implemented. (Item 3.8)
- 3.7** Noted that discussions were in progress with Queen's University Belfast in respect of the Marks and Standards for the jointly-awarded MSc in Plasma and Vacuum Technology. (Item 3.11)
- 3.8** Noted that all arrangements were in train to ensure the implementation of the policy on Recognition of Prior Learning. (Item 3.13)
- 3.9** Noted that the revised *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* had been circulated in finalised, approved form to Academic Council on 30 May 2011 and that they would be implemented with effect from 26 September 2011. (Item 3.17)

- 3.10** Noted that discussions were in progress about the mechanisms for ensuring progression from BEng to MEng and the desirability or otherwise of using the slash in 'BEng/MEng'. (Item 3.19)
- 3.11** Noted that proposals on the management of requests for admission to programmes in Oscail which are no longer current would shortly be submitted for the consideration of the USC. (See also Items 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 below.) (Item 3.20)
- 3.12** Noted that discussions were in progress about the feasibility of including marks for previous years' contributions on broadsheets. (Item 3.24)
- 3.13** Noted that satisfactory information in respect of a nominated external examiner had been received, and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.4)
- 3.14** Noted that, following further discussion with a School, a nomination for an external examiner had been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.6)
- 3.15** Noted that, following the provision of further information by a School, a nomination for an external examiner had been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.18)
- 3.16** Noted that, following clarification that an external examiner was proposed for a renewal of appointment as distinct from a change of duties, the re-nomination had been deemed approved. (Item 5.2.1)
- 3.17** Noted that, following further discussion with the Programme Chair, a request for re-admission of a student to the MSc in Business Management programme had been approved by Chair's action. (Item 6.1.1)
- 3.18** Noted that, following the addition of a stipulation that the timeframe for completion might be extended if deemed appropriate, a request for re-admission of a student to the MEng in Telecommunications Engineering programme had been deemed approved. (Item 6.2.1)
- 3.19** Noted that a template to inform decisions about the re-admission of students to the MA in Journalism was in use the School of Communications and that a request for re-admission of a particular student had been approved electronically by the USC. (Item 6.3.1)
- 3.20** Noted that the USC template for the submission of requests for re-admission of students to programmes had been amended to include a request to stipulate the date of initial registration and to replace the reference to date of completion with a reference to maximum completion time. (Item 6.4)

- 3.21** Noted that the proposals with respect to non-major awards had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 27 June 2011 subject to additional changes to Marks and Standards to ensure consistency of information. Noted that the Working Group on Non-major Awards would submit proposals to the Education Committee, for consideration at its meeting of 2 November 2011, on approval procedures for such awards. (Item 7.1.1)
- 3.22** Noted that discussions were in progress between a Programme Board and the Teaching Council to ascertain the feasibility of having professional requirements for Physical Education teachers clearly specified in Council documentation, and that the Programme Board was continuing to examine the possibility of providing alternative assessment mechanisms. (Item 7.3)
- 3.23** Noted that a revised paper on English-language requirements, currently under discussion in Faculties, would be submitted (together with comments from Faculties, as appropriate) for the consideration of the Graduate Studies Board at its meeting of 3 November 2011. (Item 8.2)
- 3.24** Noted that the progress of the small number of students registered without having met English-language requirements would be ascertained as soon as possible. (Items 9.2 and 9.3)
- 3.25** Noted that proposals on the management of communication with external examiners, and on engagement with externs, would be drafted, initially for the consideration of Faculties and then for the consideration of the USC at its meeting of 17 November 2011. (Item 10.1)
- 3.26** Noted, in respect of the communication of external examiners' recommendations and the confirmation that these had been acted upon, that vendor requirements had been worked out, companies had tendered for the work and a decision on the company to use was due to be taken. Noted that the funding that had been made available by the Quality Promotion Committee had been very helpful in enabling this work to be progressed. Agreed that arrangements should be made for Registry and Information Systems and Services to brief the Heads' meeting about this issue at the first appropriate opportunity. Agreed that the composition of the working group which would implement the next phase of the project would be identified as soon as possible and the USC and Heads briefed accordingly. (Item 10.2)
- 3.27** Noted that the Staff-Student Engagement Conference, held on 13-14 September 2011, had been very successful and had facilitated a positive start to the academic year. On behalf of the USC, the Chair expressed appreciation to the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and all others involved in organising the event. It was agreed that appropriate follow-up would be most important and noted that some of the systems about which information had been made available,

including those from the linked colleges, might very usefully be shared more widely than is the case at present. Particular reference was made, in this regard, to the METIS system used by Mater Dei Institute of Education to manage teaching practice, and it was suggested that a presentation on this system be made either to the USC or to another grouping within the University, as appropriate; the Chair requested the membership to give consideration to how this and other presentations might best be organised. It was noted that the student debate had been well received, and agreed that Dr Blin and Ms Munro would communicate this to students as appropriate as well as mentioning the positive reception given to the emphasis placed by students throughout the conference on student responsibility for learning. It was agreed that it would be desirable to encourage academic staff to attend future such conferences, and the planned presentations, and it was suggested that the Heads of School might be consulted about this. (Item 11.1)

- 3.28** Noted that contact details for a specialist in student feedback in the University of Manchester had been made available to the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education. (Item 11.3)
- 3.29** Noted that the proposals on Higher Doctorates had been approved by Executive on 31 May 2011 and by Academic Council on 27 June 2011, and that the final approved version had been made available to the USC and the Graduate Studies Board on 25 July 2011. (Item 12)
- 3.30** Noted that a meeting had taken place on 8 September 2011 between USC members and representatives of Faculty Administration to agree a number of procedural issues with regard to the management of the USC for 2011/12, and that the decisions would be communicated to the USC soon. (Item 13)
- 3.31** Noted that programme-specific regulations 2010/11 for the BA in Applied Language and Intercultural Studies/BA in Languages for International Communication and the MA in Sexuality Studies had been approved electronically by the USC on 29 July 2011.
- 3.32** Noted that changes to continuous assessment resit categories for four modules in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences had been approved electronically by the USC on 29 July 2011, though it had been observed that, for future reference, the approval of a late change in this respect should not be regarded as setting a precedent and such requests should be avoided lest a student find him/herself in a position of not having a resit opportunity having previously understood that such an opportunity existed.

- 3.33** Noted that the re-admission of three candidates to the MSc in Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy had been approved electronically by the USC on 29 July 2011. The candidates have been made aware of the timeframe for completion of the programme.
- 3.34** Noted, in respect of two requests for re-admission of candidates to the Bachelor of Nursing Studies, that they had been approved by the USC electronically on 29 July 2011, subject to clarifications in the case of the requirements for the first candidate (which had been provided by the Programme Board) and a stipulation as to the timeframe for completion in the case of the second candidate (which had been made by the Programme Board). Noted, in respect of a request for re-admission of a third candidate, that the advice of the USC as to what the candidate should be required to do, provided electronically on 29 July 2011, had been taken; the request was therefore deemed approved. It was agreed, however, that in the event that undue financial hardship ensued for the candidate, the request might be resubmitted for the consideration of the USC with a view to identifying an alternative mechanism whereby all outstanding learning outcomes could be achieved.
- 4. Minutes of the meetings of the Graduate Studies Board of 5 May 2011 and 30 June 2011**

Approved. Noted, with respect to Item 12.1 of the minutes of the meeting of 30 June 2011, that the communication should take place with the Deputy President/Registrar in the first instance.

SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES

5.1 Appointment of external examiners

- 5.1.1 Dr Paula Murphy, Trinity College Dublin
BSc in Genetics and Cell Biology
Approved.
- 5.1.2 Professor Cathy Urquhart, Manchester Metropolitan University
Modules in Information Systems in Dublin City University Business School
Approved subject to clarification in respect of the period of time for which the appointment was requested.
Approved.
- 5.1.3 Professor Zhili Sun, University of Surrey
MEng in Electronic Systems and MEng in Telecommunications Engineering
Approved.

- 5.1.4 Professor Noel Buckley, University of Limerick
BSc in Applied Physics, BSc in Physics with Astronomy and BSc in Physics with Biomedical Sciences
Approved.
- 5.1.5 Dr Stephen McKinney, University of Glasgow
Religious Studies in St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.1.6 Dr P J Matthews, University College Dublin
English in St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.1.7 Professor Thomas J Hayden, University College Dublin
Bioscience in St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.1.8 Dr Donal O'Donovan, Trinity College Dublin
Mathematics in St Patrick's College
Approved.

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

- 5.2.1 Mr David Matthew Bedford Clarke, European Commission
Modules in Translation in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved.
- 5.2.2 Professor Stephen Allen, Queen's University Belfast
Modules in Engineering on the BSc in Biotechnology
Approved.
- 5.2.3 Professor Gary Walsh, University of Limerick
Modules in Biology on the BSc in Analytical Science
Approved.
- 5.2.4 Professor Nicholas O'Regan, University of the West of England
Master of Business Administration
Approved.
- 5.2.5 Dr Julia Walsh, University College Cork
BSc in Physical Education with Biology
Approved.
- 5.2.6 Professor Tony Warne, University of Salford
Postgraduate programmes in Nursing
Approved.
- 5.2.7 Ms Sue Higham, The Open University
Modules in the School of Nursing
Approved subject to the provision of satisfactory information as to the reason for the expansion of duties.

- 5.2.8 Dr Norah Power, University of Limerick
Modules in Information Technology in Oscail
Approved.
- 5.2.9 Professor Norma Clarke, Kingston University
BA/Diploma in Humanities, Oscail
Decision deferred pending receipt of more detailed information of the rationale for the request.
- 5.2.10 Dr Sylvie Lannegrand, National University of Ireland, Galway
Modules in French in St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.2.11 Professor Robert Wood, University of Manchester
MSc in Electronic Commerce (Technical)
Approved.

Agreed that it would be helpful to expand the heading 'reason for change [of duties]' to incorporate a request to indicate that the examiner is an appropriate person to deal with the additional modules. Agreed that a wording would be devised and, subject to USC approval, would replace the current wording on the EE2 form.

Agreed that, henceforth, where a nominee has no previous experience as external examiner for DCU or its linked colleges (as distinct from any other organisations), this will be stated on EE1 forms more explicitly than is the case at present.

6. Other issues

6.1 Faculty of Engineering and Computing

6.1.1 Request for re-admission of a candidate to the MEng in Electronic Engineering, 2010/11

Approved.

6.1.2 Request for re-admission of a candidate to the MEng in Electronic Engineering, 2010/11

Approved.

Noted that discussion was under way in both the Faculty of Engineering and Computing and Oscail about the possibility of stipulating limits on the number of years of absence from a programme which could obtain if a candidate were to be considered for re-admission (see also item 3.11 above). Agreed that the outcome of the discussions, together with the rationale for any proposals that arose from them, would be made available to the USC as soon as possible so as to inform decision-making on this issue University

wide, on the basis of equity of treatment for students. Noted, however, that different considerations might need to be taken into account for different disciplines in making decisions. The importance of maintaining equity of treatment of candidates regardless of the year in which they submit their request, and of linking the issue appropriately with the policy on Recognition of Prior Learning, was noted.

Noted that, where a candidate has been admitted on a 'legacy' basis (as for example at 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 above), and does not complete the programme in the time stipulated at the point of re-admission, a decision may need to be taken as to whether an additional academic session can be granted; however, clarification is required as to whether this decision should be taken by the USC (which approved the re-admission) or the Progression and Awards Board (which is the body that normally decides on the appropriateness or otherwise of granting additional academic sessions). Agreed that the Chair would revert to the USC on this matter.

6.1.3 Request for approval of updated programme regulations 2011/12 for the Open Opportunities in Engineering programme

Approved subject to the submission of revised wording to clarify the intention of the Programme Board. Agreed that final approval could be obtained electronically, given that all programme regulations for 2011/12 are to be made available on the Registry website on 26 September 2011.

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)

7. Marks and Standards

7.1 Consistency of Marks and Standards for future reference

Agreed that it would be desirable to conceptualise Marks and Standards as being valid until further notice rather than as being 'interim'. Agreed that a small, short-life working group would be established which would report to the USC in the first half of 2011/12 and would have a very specific objective, i.e. to conduct a read-through of Marks and Standards and the associated FAQs with the aim of ensuring complete consistency throughout the documentation. Agreed that the group should include a Programme Chair and an Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning/Education. USC members are requested to contact Ms McDermott with further suggestions as to the membership of the group.

7.2 Proposed new FAQ in respect of Marks and Standards

7.2.1 Approved. Noted that no change to Marks and Standards would be required and that the FAQ simply provided a clarification. Noted too, however, that a change to the ITS Calculate programme would be required to ensure that the regulation to which the FAQ refers is automated.

7.2.2 Noted, as a related issue, that the standard calculate rule (which includes the automation of preponderance) caters only for one year of study. Therefore programmes of study over more than one year (for example, part-time and continuous programmes) continue to have manual calculations. This matter is to be discussed between the Registry and the Faculty Managers.

7.2.3 An issue arises as to whether or not double rounding up of marks may be occurring, thereby potentially benefitting some students unduly. Agreed that Ms Bruton would submit a paper on this issue to the 17 November 2011 meeting of the USC.

7.3 Financial implications for students repeating taught Master's programmes: proposals relating to these

7.3.1 The difficulties encountered by such students were noted, though it was noted also that issues relating to fees fall within the remit of the Finance Office rather than of the USC and should therefore be referred to the Finance Office.

7.3.2 In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- extending the academic session for such students might be likely to be of assistance to them, although previous experience in the Faculty of Science and Health indicates that such a course of action might carry significant organisational challenges
- it would be important to ensure equity of treatment between Master's students who fail a dissertation and Master's or other students who fail taught modules
- allowing the students a longer and/or different time period to complete the dissertation at the first sitting might be considered as an alternative course of action
- consideration might be given to holding Progression and Awards Boards for taught Master's programmes at a later point in the year than early September, where this early September date is considered problematic
- it is important to ensure that part-time students are subject to deadlines appropriate to them rather than to the same deadlines as full-time students
- it might be useful to factor into the discussion consideration of the system now used in respect of research students, whereby a completion period up to the end of the calendar year is permitted on payment of a fee for a Grace Card.

7.3.3 It was agreed that the relevant members of the USC would discuss the issues with a view to making a proposal to the 17 November 2011 meeting, and that Dr Lisa Looney, incoming Dean of Graduate Studies, would be included in the discussion.

8. Feedback on the display of the precision mark and decimalised values on portal pages

8.1 With respect to the display of the precision mark on portal pages, it was noted that there is variation in terms of views across Faculties about the optimum approach to making the relationship between module marks and the precision mark clear. It was also noted that it would be very important to ensure that Progression and Awards Boards continue to have discretion, as appropriate, in terms of decision-making on students' overall grades, especially in view of the fact that it is not reasonable to expect that marking systems can pinpoint student performance in an absolutely precise sense in most cases.

8.2 The Chair, on behalf of the USC, thanked Ms Gillian Barry, Student Awards Manager in the Registry, for her work in collating the feedback on this issue to date. It was agreed that further feedback would be required to resolve the issue, and that therefore the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education would shortly submit views to Ms McMorrow which, together with the feedback already made available through the Registry, would be sent to Faculties to inform discussion at Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committee meetings. The outcome of these meetings will inform further discussion, and decision, at the USC.

8.3 It was agreed that, pending further discussion at Faculty level relating to the desirability of use of decimal values on student portal pages, the current practice would continue, i.e. the current practice would continue, i.e. integers only will be displayed, together with an explanatory note in respect of the calculation of the final mark.

9. Proposal from Oscail for an amendment to the examination deferral regulations

Approved. Agreed that, when approval of the proposal is being sought from Academic Council at its meeting of 12 October 2011, it will be stipulated that what is being requested of Council is that the amendment, if approved, be implemented with immediate effect, i.e. for the academic year 2011/12.

10. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting:

**17 November 2011
9.00 a.m. in A204**

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____