

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 22 March 2007

9.30 a.m.-11.30 a.m. in A204

Present: Dr Noel Murphy (Chair to 10.30 a.m.), Professor Maria Slowey (Chair from 10.30 a.m.), Ms Olivia Bree, Mr Eoin Byrne, Professor Martin Henry, Professor Eugene Kennedy, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Andrew McGrady, Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Dr Gerry McNamara, Dr Ronnie Saunders, Dr Anne Sinnott

Apologies: Mr Jonathan Begg, Ms Jean Hughes, Professor Heather Ruskin, Mr Brendan Tolan

In attendance: Dr Gary Murphy (for Item 7)

On behalf of Professor Slowey, Dr Murphy welcomed Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Acting Director of Registry, to membership of the University Standards Committee.

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of five new submissions under Item 8.1, the deferral of Items 8.2.11, 8.2.12 and 8.1.13 to the 7 June meeting of the USC and the inclusion of a new submission (new Item 8.2.11) under Item 8.2.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 1 February 2007

Confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 Follow-up actions from the last meeting were reported.

- 3.2** Noted that the Chair would raise with the Deputy President the issue of devolution to Faculties of some activities currently undertaken centrally. (Item 3.3)
- 3.3** Noted that proposals in relation to the academic framework for innovation were currently under discussion within Faculties, that the Academic Strategy Committee had been briefed on progress (at its meeting of 7 March 2007) and that it was intended to bring revised proposals to Academic Council at its meeting of 13 June 2007. The following were also noted: it would be very important to address all the issues raised in discussion and to clarify the proposal further so as to distinguish more clearly than is the case at present between modules and awards; the principles originally set out in the presentation on the framework to the 14 February 2007 meeting of Academic Council might have to be amended; the timescales involved should be realistic; the exercise was likely to provide further opportunities for integration with modules offered in the linked colleges. (Item 3.4)
- 3.4** Noted that work was in progress to prepare for the implementation of the revised compensation regulations for the academic year 2007/08. (Item 3.5)
- 3.5** Noted that, to inform the discussions of the working group set up to discuss issues relating to the delivery and award of programmes by DCU and another institution, or other institutions, Mr Gordon McConnell intended to make available detailed information on the establishment of memoranda of understanding and other types of inter-institutional agreements, and that he first intended to discuss this issue with Dr Claire Bohan, Director of Student Affairs. (Item 3.6)
- 3.6** Dr Murphy circulated a revised draft of the proposed new report form for external examiners for taught programmes. Agreed that this issue would be discussed at the 7 June 2007 meeting of the USC. (Item 4)
- 3.7** Noted that a proposal to amend a section of the examination regulations, on foot of consultation with the Secretary's Office, would be submitted to Academic Council at its meeting of 18 April 2007. (Item 6)

4. Proposed amendment to examination regulations

Approved subject to the inclusion of 'or equivalent' after 'pencil case'.

5. Proposed changes to *Marks and Standards*: marks bands

- 5.1** Agreed that the way in which the precision mark is calculated is not relevant to the attribution of a grade to a particular marks band; equally, the issue of whether a

final-year precision mark is arrived at with or without a contribution from marks obtained in previous years is not relevant. Agreed, therefore, that the implementation of changes to marks bands could be considered for 2007/08 and not, as had been decided at the meeting of 1 February 2007, for 2008/09 or a later year.

- 5.2** Agreed that where modules are failed, and passed at a repeat attempt, the grade awarded should be that which corresponds to the final precision mark achieved, irrespective of how this precision mark is arrived at (i.e. irrespective of whether any modules have been failed and subsequently passed and of any local penalties, such as the capping at 40% of marks obtained at repeat attempts, which may have been applied to any module mark(s) prior to the calculation of the precision mark).
- 5.3** Agreed that derogations should not be encouraged and should be requested only where absolutely necessary (on one of the two grounds already agreed). Agreed that derogations should apply only in the case of the Third-class Honours classification and should never apply in the case of the Second-class Honours, grade one or two, or First-class Honours classifications.
- 5.4** Agreed that Ms McDermott would draw up a revised proposal for approval, on an electronic basis, by the members of the USC and subsequently for submission to Academic Council at its meeting of 18 April 2007. This revised proposal would contain a recommendation that, subject to the implementation of the revised marks bands being feasible from a systems point of view in the time available, the new system should operate from the beginning of the academic year 2007/08.
- 5.5** Noted that the University does not have a generic template describing standards to be achieved per grade (or per marks band within a grade).

6. Credit adjustment for taught Master's programmes 2007/2008

- 6.1** The proposal was approved, apart from any situation in which students had already completed the dissertation in Year 1, in which case the proposal might work to their disadvantage.
- 6.2** Agreed that Ms McMorrow would investigate the possibility of adding a note to the Diploma Supplement for taught Master's programmes to state that the programme had previously had a credit rating of 75 but that this had been raised to 90.

7. Proposal on graduate studies

7.1 On behalf of the USC, Professor Slowey congratulated Dr Gary Murphy on his appointment to the position of Director of Graduate Studies.

7.2 In the course of the discussion, the following general points were made:

- The IUA intends to adopt a national approach to fourth-level education
- The setting up of a DCU Graduate School will shortly be announced
- In view of the proposed HEA funding mechanism for research students (a maximum of four years to be funded for full-time students, and possibly a maximum of six years for part-time students) it will be important to support students so as to enable them to complete their research in a timely fashion.

7.3 The following were noted as issues relating to a DCU research training programme:

- Consideration is being given to attributing a fixed credit rating per calendar year of study
- It will be important to maintain the highest standards in terms of research and to ensure that, even if some credits are allocated to taught modules, the majority of credits are attributed to research
- Consideration is being given to the setting up of doctoral panels to make recommendations as to progression; this is in line with international best practice; notwithstanding this, it should be ensured that processes are as simple and transparent as possible
- It is recognised that such panels effectively exist already in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Dublin City University Business School and that they convene every six months
- Where the number of research students is particularly large, flexibility in terms of how frequently panels convene might be considered
- Progression should be a very rigorous process
- Career planning should be included as an element in the taught modules
- To the greatest extent possible, taught modules should be based on the content of training opportunities already being provided to research students; it is recognised that this may involve logistical difficulties and that it will be important to keep in mind the differences between research in the Humanities and in the Sciences; it is also noted that students on taught doctoral programmes are effectively already taking relevant taught modules
- Taught modules should be tightly structured, and a clear distinction should be drawn between compulsory and optional modules; the risk of

over-examining should be borne in mind; the supervisor should sign off on the training programme to be followed by the student, having exercised flexibility as appropriate in the selection of modules

- Taught module should incorporate the relevant NQF learning outcomes
- To facilitate part-time students, taught modules should be timetabled on a flexible basis.

A discussion also took place about the possibility that the USC, which currently deals with a range of issues of relevance to research students and external examiners, might function as a graduate studies board. This would very likely involve additional meetings, chaired by Dr Murphy.

INTERIM BUSINESS ON BEHALF OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL

8. Appointment of external examiners

8.1 Taught programmes

- 8.1.1 Dr B McNair, University of Strathclyde
MA in Political and Public Communication, MA in Journalism
Approved.
- 8.1.2 Dr C Ó Giollagáin, National University of Ireland, Galway
Modules in Irish translation in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Agreed to ask the School to identify an alternative nominee, not associated with the University within the past five years.
- 8.1.3 Dr J Porter, University of Bath
Graduate Certificate in the Education of Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs, St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 8.1.4 *Reappointments*
Professor T Hassall, Sheffield Hallam University
Modules in Accounting in Dublin City University Business School
Professor J Ward, University of Ulster
Modules in Taxation in Dublin City University Business School
Approved.
- 8.1.5 *Reappointment*
Professor D Remenyi, Henley Management College
Modules on the BSc in Information Technology, Oscail
Approved.

- 8.1.6 *Amendments*
Dr H Aveyard, Oxford Brookes University
Modules on the Bachelor of Nursing Studies
Mr C Feltham, Sheffield Hallam University
Modules on the Graduate Diploma/MSc in Counselling
(Couples and Relationships)
Approved.
- 8.1.7 Professor M S Ferrara, University of Georgia
BSc in Athletic Therapy and Training
Approved subject to clarification of the start and end dates of the appointment and of the reason two external examiners, as distinct from one, appeared to be necessary (see 8.1.8 below).
- 8.1.8 Dr U McCarthy Persson, University College Dublin
BSc in Athletic Therapy and Training
Approved subject to clarification of the start and end dates of the appointment and of the reason two external examiners, as distinct from one, appeared to be necessary (see 8.1.7 above).
- 8.1.9 *Amendments*
Professor C Murray, University College Dublin
Modules on the BA in Humanities, Oscail
Professor N Sheehy, Liverpool John Moores University
Modules in Psychology, Oscail
Approved.
- 8.1.10 Professor P Dodds, University of Massachusetts
BSc in Physical Education with Biology
Approved subject to clarification of the start and end dates of the appointment and of the nature of the duties to be undertaken.
- 8.1.11 *Reappointment*
Professor D Hanley, Cardiff University
Modules in the School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 8.1.12 Dr M Conway, St Patrick's College, Maynooth
Modules on the BA in Irish Studies and Religious Studies, Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.
- 8.1.13 Dr R Gallagher, Alphonsian Academy, Rome
Modules on the MA in Religion and Education and the MA in Religion and Culture, Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.
- 8.1.14 Dr P Kieran, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick
Modules on the Bachelor of Religious Education programme and the Undergraduate Certificate in Theology, Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.

- 8.1.15 Dr F Long, University College Cork
Modules on the MA in Religion and Education and the MA in Religion and Culture, Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.
- 8.1.16 Dr K O'Mahony, Milltown Institute
Modules on the Bachelor of Religious Education programme, Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.

Agreed that, where a change of duties for an external examiner for a taught programme was requested, information on the reason for the change, and confirmation of the examiner's competence to undertake the different duties, should be sought. Agreed that Ms McDermott would draft a form of words for the use of Schools in such cases and submit it to the USC.

8.2 Postgraduate research students

- 8.2.1 Professor L Gibbons, Notre Dame University
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.1, PhD, School of Communications
Approved.
- 8.2.2 Professor A Fell, University of Bradford
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.2, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved.
- 8.2.3 Dr D S Paik, Stanford University
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.3, MEng, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved.
- 8.2.4 Dr C McGuinness, Trinity College Dublin
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.4, PhD, School of Physical Sciences
Approved.
- 8.2.5 Dr D Finn, University College Dublin
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.5, PhD, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Approved.
- 8.2.6 Dr A Feng, Durham University
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.6, MA, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved.
- 8.2.7 Professor R Spina, Politecnico di Bari
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.7, PhD, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Approved.

- 8.2.8 Professor M A Lieberman, University of California at Berkeley
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.8, PhD, School of Physical Sciences
Approved.
- 8.2.9 Dr A O'Donnell, University College Dublin
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.9, MA, Education Department,
St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 8.2.10 Dr K M Armour, Loughborough University
Professor M O'Sullivan, University of Limerick
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.10, PhD, Education Department,
St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 8.2.11 Dr D Caruana, University College London
Student ref. USC/2007/U2/8.2.11, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved.

Agreed that, where an external examiner submitted a curriculum vitae in a language other than English, e.g. in Irish, he/she would be requested also to submit an English-language equivalent or, if that were not possible, an English-language summary.

On the matter of the nomination of external examiners from overseas, and specifically from the US and mainland Europe, it was agreed that, apart from cases in which the US was clearly a leader in a particular field, consideration should, ideally, be given to European nominees in view of the desirability of enhancing co-operation in the context of the Bologna process.

9. Postgraduate research matters

9.1 Application for special-case entry to the PhD track

None.

9.2 Applications to transfer to the PhD register

- 9.2.1 Student ref. USC/2007/U2/9.2.1, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved.
- 9.2.2 Student ref. USC/2007/U2/9.2.2, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved.

- 9.2.3 Student ref. USC/2007/U2/9.2.3, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved.
- 9.2.4 Student ref. USC/2007/U2/9.2.4, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved.
- 9.2.5 Student ref. USC/2007/U2/9.2.5, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved.
- 9.2.6 Student ref. USC/2007/U2/9.2.6, School of Education Studies
Approved.
- 9.2.7 Student ref. USC/2007/U2/9.2.7, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved.
- 9.2.8 Student ref. USC/2007/U2/9.2.8, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved.
- 9.2.9 Student ref. USC/2007/U2/9.2.9, National Institute for Cellular Biotechnology
Approved.

10. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 7 June 2007

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____