

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 24 November 2011

12.00-2.45 p.m. in A204

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Dermot Brabazon,
Ms Olivia Bree, Ms Jennifer Bruton, Mr Cillian Byrne,
Mr Billy Kelly, Professor Conor Long, Dr Lisa Looney,
Ms Barbara McConalogue, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary),
Ms Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Dr Anne Morrissey,
Ms Annabella Stover, Dr Sheelagh Wickham

Apologies: Ms Bernadette Dowling, Ms Phylomena McMorrow,
Mr Ronan Tobin

In attendance: Ms Gillian Barry

The Chair welcomed Dr Lisa Looney, recently-appointed Dean of Graduate Studies, and Ms Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, recently-appointed Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, to their first meeting of the University Standards Committee

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of three submissions under Item 5.1, one submission under Item 5.2 and two submissions under Item 11.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 15 September 2011

The minutes were approved subject to the following:

The inclusion of Ms Barbara McConalogue's name in the list of those who had submitted apologies for inability to attend.

The rewording of the first two lines of Item 3.25 to read:

'Noted that proposals on the management of communication with external examiners, and on engagement with externs, ... '

The rewording of Item 7.2.2 to read:

'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.'

The rewording of Item 8.3 to read:

'It was agreed that, pending further discussion at Faculty level relating to the desirability of the use of decimal values on student portal pages, 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.'

The minutes were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Noted that the universities are in discussion with the Teaching Council about a range of issues, The majority of issues being dealt with by the universities are predominantly related to second-level education at present, but issues related to primary education will be dealt with in the near future, and the Chair will keep Ms Bree apprised of developments and will also hold a detailed discussion with relevant colleagues in the University of Limerick, on the basis that Mary Immaculate College of Education may have interests and concerns similar to those of St Patrick's College. (See also Item 9 below.) (Item 3.1) Interaction with the Teaching Council is likely to be a dominant issue on the agenda of the IUA Registrars Group during 2012; DCU holds chairing responsibilities for the IUA Council and working groups during this period.

- 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 3.3)
- 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 3.4)
- 3.5** Noted that it now appeared unlikely that an external examiner would respond to the Chair on an issue he had raised in respect of the University's policy on plagiarism. (Item 3.5)
- 3.6** 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 3.7)
- 3.7** 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 3.10)
- 3.8** Noted that issues have arisen whereby students re-admitted to programmes by the USC, on a legacy basis, have subsequently not fulfilled the requirements laid down by the USC as conditions for re-admission. It was agreed that, as a matter of principle, intervention by the USC in these situations should be as minimal as would be appropriate in the case of any student admitted to the University; however, it was agreed also that further discussion would be helpful. In order to inform this further discussion, it was agreed that a list of all students re-admitted on a legacy basis, and details of their subsequent academic performance, would be made available to the USC at its meeting of 26 January 2012. As a related matter, proposals on the management of requests from legacy students in Oscail to programmes which are no longer current will be brought to this same meeting of the USC. (Items 3.11 and 6)
- 3.9** Noted that discussions were in progress about the feasibility of including marks for previous years' contributions on broadsheets. (Item 3.12)

- 3.10** Noted that the Working Group on Non-Major Awards would make an interim report to the Education Committee at its meeting of 7 December 2011. (Item 3.21)
- 3.11** 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. (See also Item 9 below.) (Item 3.22)
- 3.12** Noted that, at the Graduate Studies Board meeting of 3 November 2011, the outcome of discussion in Faculties about English-language requirements for non-native speakers had been considered. There is variation across Faculties in terms of opinion as to whether these requirements should be maintained or (perhaps for admission to Schools in particular Faculties) made less stringent. It was agreed that, were exceptions to be allowed locally, the issue should be discussed from the time of application and admission of the student, with the supervisor(s) and Head of School being closely involved, and with local stipulations being made as to standards and the timeframe within which they should be achieved. Attainment or otherwise of these standards might be recorded and factored into standard progression mechanisms (e.g. the PGR2 Annual Progress Report form). Dr Looney undertook to write a recommendation along these lines for the consideration of the Graduate Studies Board at its meeting of 12 January 2012. With respect to the provision of support for students, the existence of the International Foundation Programme and the Graduate Training Element consisting of an English-language module was noted. It was agreed that, with respect to the IFP, close contact should be maintained, as appropriate, with SALIS, because it manages this programme. Noted that the progress of the small number of research students registered without having met English-language requirements would be ascertained as soon as possible. (Item 3.23)
- 3.13** Noted that the 26 January 2012 meeting of the USC would include a paper with draft recommendations for the establishment of standards and guidelines relating to the management of communication and engagement with external examiners. The intention is that the recommendations, modified if necessary by the USC, would be submitted for the consideration of Faculties and that this would be followed by further consideration by the USC. Following USC and then Academic Council approval, the standards and guidelines would be implemented from the beginning of 2012/13. (Item 3.25)

- 3.14** Noted that the electronic system for the distribution of external examiners' reports had been identified and demonstrated to the Heads' and Deans' meeting of 29 September 2011 and that the working group to implement it includes Heads of School in its membership. It is expected that the system will be operational by Spring 2012. (Item 3.26)
- 3.15** Noted that the students involved in the STage conference on 13 and 14 September 2011 had been made aware of the very positive reaction both to the debate they had organised and to the emphasis they had placed throughout the conference on student responsibility for learning. (Item 3.27)
- 3.16** In the case of a candidate who had applied for re-admission to the Bachelor of Nursing Studies programme on a legacy basis and had been permitted to re-enter (in 2011/12) on the basis of certain conditions, it was noted that financial considerations had prevented her from re-entering. It was agreed to reconsider the candidate's case in the event that she re-applied for re-admission at a future date. (Item 3.34)
- 3.17** In the case of an issue which had arisen in a Faculty about the management of the process for transfer to/confirmation on the PhD register, and which had been discussed by the Graduate Studies Board at meetings earlier in 2011, it was noted that the discussions were now taking place within the Faculty with a view to resolution there. (Item 4)
- 3.18** Noted that clarification about the proposed dates of appointment of an external examiner had been obtained, and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.2)
- 3.19** Noted that a change had been made to the administrative note made on EE1 (appointment of external examiner) forms to indicate that, where it is stated that there is no previous external examining experience, the reference is intended to be to DCU and its linked colleges. (Item 5.2)
- 3.20** Noted that a change had been made to the EE2 (renewal of appointment/changes to duties) form to allow for confirmation that, where an expansion of duties is requested, the examiner is an appropriate person to undertake the additional duties envisaged. (Item 5.2)
- 3.21** Noted that a detailed rationale for a request for an exceptional reappointment of an external examiner had been provided, and the re-appointment had been approved by Chair's action on 1 November 2011. (Item 5.2.9)

- 3.22** Noted that revised programme regulations 2011/12 for Open Opportunities in Engineering had been approved electronically by the USC on 22 September 2011. (Item 6.1.3)
- 3.23** Noted that the short-life working group established to read through Marks and Standards and associated documentation with a view to ensuring their clarity and consistency (and not with a view to recommending changes to their substance) would make its recommendations to the USC at the meeting of 26 January 2011. (Item 7.1)
- 3.24** On the issue of fee implications for taught Master's students who effectively have no resit opportunity for their dissertations, it was noted that a proposal (for a limited fee similar to the 'card fee' used by research students) was due for submission to Budget Committee and, following that, Executive. (Item 7.3.3)
- 3.25** With regard to the desirability, or otherwise, of displaying precision marks on portal pages, it was noted that feedback had been submitted from two Faculties and further feedback was expected, following which the matter will be discussed again by the USC (at its meeting of 26 January 2011). (Item 8.2)
- 3.26** Noted that an amendment to the examination deferral regulations had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 12 October 2011, as had the accompanying request that the amendment be implemented with immediate effect, i.e. from 2011/12. (Item 9)
- 4. Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 8 September 2011**
- 4.1** Approved.
- 4.2** The proposed footnote to the new *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*, which had been approved by the GSB at its meeting of 3 November 2011, was approved. This footnote stipulates that, while supervisory panels may be used in the case of any research student, they are actually a requirement only in the case of research students first registered in 2011/12 or later.

SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES**5.1 Appointment of external examiners**

- 5.1.1 Dr Gavan Titley, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
BA in Contemporary Culture and Society
Approved.
- 5.1.2 Professor Bernadette Andreosso, University of Limerick
Modules in Economics and Entrepreneurship in Dublin City University Business School
Approved.
- 5.1.3 Professor Dominique Bouchet, University of Southern Denmark
Marketing modules in Dublin City University Business School
Approved subject to clarification that the nomination is as module rather than programme examiner and that the two non-DCUBS modules listed are not already the responsibility of another external examiner.
- 5.1.4 Professor Philip Hamill, University of Ulster
Modules in Finance in Dublin City University Business School
Approved.
- 5.1.5 Dr Niall Geraghty, National University of Ireland, Galway
BSc in Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences and BSc in Analytical Science
Approved.
- 5.1.6 Professor Finbarr O'Sullivan, University College Cork
Modules in Statistics in the School of Computing
Approved.
- 5.1.7 Professor Michael Gerard Hinchey, University of Limerick
MSc in Software Engineering
Approved.
- 5.1.8 Dr Artur Grzenkowicz, IBM
MSc in Software Engineering
Approved.
- 5.1.9 Professor Andreas Gadatsch, Bonn Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences
European MSc in Business Informatics
Approved.
- 5.1.10 Dr Eoin Whelan, National University of Ireland, Galway
European MSc in Business Informatics
Approved.
- 5.1.11 Dr John Cardiff, Tallaght Institute of Technology
Graduate Diploma in Information Technology
Approved.

- 5.1.12 Professor Jack Whitehead, Liverpool Hope University
MSc in Education and Training Management (e-Learning)
Approved.
- 5.1.13 Professor Sheelagh Drudy, University College Dublin
Professional Diploma in Education
Approved up to and including the academic year 2013/14.
- 5.1.14 Professor Alan Nevill, University of Wolverhampton
BSc in Sport Science and Health
Approved.
- 5.1.15 Dr Fidelma White, University College Cork
Modules in Law in the School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 5.1.16 Dr Christian Kaunert, University of Salford
MA in International Relations, MA in International Security and Conflict Studies,
MA in Development
Approved subject to confirmation that the nomination is for four years, i.e.
2011/12-2014/15.
- 5.1.17 Dr Catherine Holt, Cardiff University
BEng in Biomedical Engineering
Approved subject to clarification of the answer to question 4 on the nomination
form.
- 5.1.18 Dr Amanda Haynes, University of Limerick
BA/Diploma in Humanities, Oscail
Approved.
- 5.1.19 Dr Anne Dolan, Trinity College Dublin
Modules in History in Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.
- 5.1.20 Mr Eugene Toolan, St Angela's College, Sligo
Modules in Education in Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.
- 5.1.21 Dr Geraldine Moane, University College Dublin
MA in Sexuality Studies
Approved subject to clarification of whether the nomination is as module or
programme examiner.

Agreed that, in the context of the discussion of the management of communication, and engagement, with external examiners at the USC meeting of 26 January 2012 (see Item 3.13 above), consideration would be given to the appropriateness of the wording of question 4 on the EE1 (appointment of external examiners) form, and indeed the extent to which the question is necessary. Noted that, if the question were to remain, there would be scope for wording it in such a way as to facilitate consistency of types of response.

The fact that external examiners are permitted to serve in two different Schools in the University (or in the University and a linked college, or in two linked colleges) at the same time was noted as having advantages in terms of allowing them to gain an overview of practice in different areas. However, it was also noted that there is a potential drawback because, depending on the lengths of the different periods of service, there is a risk of contravention of regulations in terms of maximum length of service. The need for a system of highlighting such risks to Heads of School in advance of nominations being submitted was noted. It was agreed to discuss the issues at the 26 January 2012 meeting of the USC.

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

- 5.2.1 Professor Gregory Connor, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
MSc in Finance and Capital Markets, MSc in Investment, Treasury and Banking,
Graduate Certificate in Corporate Treasury, Graduate Certificate in Sustainable
Energy Finance
Approved.
- 5.2.2 Professor Dominic Elliott, University of Liverpool
MSc in Emergency Management
Approved.
- 5.2.3 Dr Suzanne de Cheveigné, Centre Norbert Elias, CNRS-EHESS, France
MSc in Science Communication
Approved.
- 5.2.4 Professor Wesley Cantwell, University of Liverpool
MSc in Computer-aided Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Approved.
- 5.2.5 Dr Martin Veiga, University College Cork
Modules in Spanish in SALIS
Approved. However, noted that clarification would be required as to the exact
number of modules to be examined by Dr Veiga and also as to whether or not
approval would need to be sought for an extension of duties for another serving
external examiner.
- 5.2.6 Dr Stijn van Heule, Ghent University, Belgium
MSc in Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy
Approved for 2011/12.

6. Other issues

6.1 Faculty of Engineering and Computing

6.1.1 Proposals in respect of module exemptions

Agreed that the issues raised in the proposals were relatively straightforward as far as admission was concerned but complex as far as exit and transfer were concerned, particularly with regard to those issues relating to equity of treatment of transfer students who have passed all modules taken to date vis-à-vis those who have not. Agreed that Ms Bruton and Ms Barry would discuss the issues and that the outcome of their discussions would be submitted for the consideration of the USC at its meeting of 26 January 2012.

6.1.2 Proposal in respect of resit categories

The proposal was not approved, on the grounds that it contained potential risks to the integrity of Marks and Standards and to equity of treatment of students. It was nonetheless noted that the proposal raised important issues, and agreed that these would be revisited by the USC at one of its meetings in the second half of 2011/12. In order to facilitate an informed discussion on this issue, the School of Computing was requested to develop an evidence-based proposal highlighting relevant national and international practice in relation to assessment of undergraduate programmes in the relevant disciplinary area.

6.2 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

6.2.1 Request for re-admission to the MA sa Chleachtas Dátheangach

Approved.

6.2.2 Request for re-admission to the MA in International Relations

Approved, with the additional stipulation that the candidate, notwithstanding previous deferrals, would, with effect from 2011/12, be entitled to the maximum completion time to which a student beginning this programme for the first time would be entitled under Marks and Standards. Noted that this decision was made in the light of the exceptional circumstances which pertain to the case.

6.3 Faculty of Science and Health

6.3.1 Request for derogation: BSc in Nursing and Higher Diploma in Children's Nursing

Noted that the USC was sympathetic to the reason the derogation had been requested. Agreed, however, that it would be preferable for the School of Nursing and Human Sciences to deal with the issue by categorising the module as resit category 2. Noted that any programme regulation devised would be likely to have significant operational implications, and agreed that these should be discussed with the relevant parties, including the Faculty Office in Science and Health and the Registry, with a view to devising solutions: Ms Barry and Dr Wickham are to meet in the first instance. Agreed that, if appropriate and necessary, approval could be carried out on an electronic basis.

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)

7. Marks and Standards

7.1 External examiner observations in the School of Computing

Agreed to advise the School to bring the issue raised to the School Teaching Committee for discussion with a view to making recommendations about the management of continuous assessment and examinations such that the observations made by the external examiners might be addressed but without prejudice to the University's Marks and Standards. Agreed that the School would be requested to forward their recommendations to the USC. Noted that a range of support and advisory mechanisms, both nationally and internationally, might be drawn upon in formulating the recommendations.

7.2 Proposal in respect of rounding up of marks

Approved.

8. Recognition of Prior Learning: data in respect of current programme-specific policies

- 8.1** Noted that the Framework Implementation Network had launched the report entitled *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the University Sector: Policies, case studies and issues arising*. This is welcome, and some of the recommendations (e.g. a mixed centralised/decentralised model) are consonant with the University's policy. However, it is noted that some others (e.g. in respect of the provision of dedicated staff and of training) are not amenable to implementation in the current extremely challenging economic situation for the University and for higher education generally.
- 8.2** Agreed that the University's policy should be available on line and that a recommendation as to the best location would be made as soon as possible.
- 8.3** The summary information provided by a number of Programme Chairs across the University about current local policies and practices, in response to a request by Dr Wickham, was noted. It was agreed that Dr Wickham would write a brief note to all Programme Chairs to provide information on the national context with regard to RPL, the importance of ensuring that all decisions in the area are made on the basis of a considered, published and transparent policy, and the steps that could be taken to ensure robustness of local policies and procedures, wherever this might be required.

9. Issues relating to the Teaching Council

The Chair mentioned a number of ongoing discussions with the Teaching Council, on a range of areas including concurrent and consecutive teacher education programmes, noting the critical importance, for the higher education sector, of ensuring a positive outcome of these discussions. It was noted too that Faculties, which had been requested for feedback on issues of concern to them in respect of consecutive teacher education programmes in particular (e.g. Teaching Council recognition of eligibility for recognition to teach particular subjects), had provided such feedback in detail. It was agreed that Ms Nic Giolla Mhicíl and Ms McDermott would meet Dr Joe O'Hara, Head of the School of Education Studies, to draft a response to the Teaching Council on the issues relating to consecutive teacher education. (See also Items 3.1 and 3.11 above.)

10. St Patrick's College: Marks and Standards for the BEd and BA programmes

Noted. The reason different Marks and Standards apply internally to different subjects is that these subjects form half of a joint honours degree rather than being modules which all contribute to a single degree.

11. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting:

**26 January 2012
9.00 a.m. in A204**

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____