UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 26 January 2012

9.00-11.40 a.m. in A204

Present:	Professor Anne Scott (Chair), 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 Phylomena McMorrow, Dr Anne Morrissey, Ms Annabella Stover, Mr Ronan Tobin, Dr Sheelagh Wickham
Apologies:	Ms Barbara McConalogue
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 additional submission under Item 5.1 and one submission under Item 12 and the deferral of Item 8.2 to the 1 March 2012 meeting.

2.   Minutes of the meeting of 24 November 2011

The minutes were approved and were signed by the Chair.

3.   Matters arising from the minutes

3.1   Noted that the title 'Professional Diploma in Education' related to teacher education programmes for teachers at second rather than at primary level. Noted that an issue had arisen in relation to the University's PDE programme, which is at Level 8 on the NFQ and has been backdated by the NQAI as such from the time of its inception under the title 'Graduate Diploma in Education'. The perception of graduates is that they have a Level 9 qualification. The Chair undertook to keep the USC apprised of developments with respect to this issue. (Item 3.1)

3.2   The following ongoing items will be discussed, as necessary, with the relevant staff members, and updates will be reported to the USC in due course and as appropriate:
   - development of the standard calculate rule (Item 2)
   - discussions with Faculties about the placing of post-1989 (i.e. DCU) qualifications on the NFQ (Item 3.2)
   - sector-wide discussions about the PAC application fee (Item 3.3)
   - future presentations by the chairs of the Disciplinary Committee and the Appeals Board (Item 3.4)
   - discussions with Queen's University Belfast in respect of the Marks and Standards for the jointly-awarded MSc in Plasma and Vacuum Technology (Item 3.6)
   - progression mechanisms from BEng to MEng, and the desirability of the term 'BEng/MEng' (Item 3.7)
   - feasibility of including marks for previous years' contributions on broadsheets (Item 3.9)
   - discussions with the Teaching Council in respect of the professional requirements for teachers of Physical Education (Item 3.11)
   - desirability or otherwise of making precision marks available on the portal page (Item 3.25)

3.3   The Working Group on Non-major Awards had made recommendations to the Education Committee meeting of 11 January 2012. The recommendations on the development and approval of awards designed to respond to calls for submission for funding had been approved, albeit with a request that further investigation of the operational issues be carried out. The recommendations on the development and approval of a wider range of non-major awards had not been approved, though they may be revisited by the EC at a future date. (Item 3.10)

3.4   Noted that the proposals on English-language requirements which were to have been submitted to the Graduate Studies Board meeting of 12 January 2012 had been deferred to the 8 March 2012 meeting because of time constraints. 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 3.12)

3.5   The working group which is developing the electronic system for the management of external examiners' reports has benefitted from funding made available through the Quality Promotion Office and is making good progress. Some parts of the system are still being built, while others are at the testing stage. Roles and responsibilities are being clarified; an external organisation has been identified which will provide the annual system support; discussions about the branding of the system are taking place with the Communications and Marketing Office. The report submission facility will be available to external examiners from the end of February or the beginning of March 2012. The external organisation has contracted to provide two days of training for relevant DCU staff as well as a training podcast to be made available to the external examiners and staff. The Chair advised that consideration should be given to the possibility that other mechanisms to assist the examiners, e.g. a support telephone line, might also need to be put in place. (Item 3.14)

3.6   Noted that appropriate financial arrangements were in place for students undertaking taught Master's programmes in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for which the dissertation submission date is later than the standard one. Issues relating to students in other areas of the University who might have similarly late submission dates are being considered by the working group under the chairmanship of Dr Looney which was established by decision of Academic Council at its meeting of 14 December 2011. (Item 3.24)

3.7   Noted that, at its meeting of 14 December 2011, Academic Council had approved the footnote to A*cademic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* which 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. (Item 4.2)

3.8   Noted that the appropriateness of the wording of question 4 on the EE1 (nomination of external examiner) form, and the need for this question, would be examined in the context of the discussions on the management of communication and engagement with external examiners (see Item 9 below). (Item 5)

3.9   Noted that clarification in respect of two issues relating to a nominated external examiner had been obtained and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.3)

3.10   Noted that clarification in respect of the duration of appointment of a nominated external examiner had been obtained and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.16)

3.11   Noted that clarification in respect of the answer to question 4 on the EE1 (nomination of external examiner) form in respect of a nominated external examiner had been obtained and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.17)

3.12   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 5.1.21)

3.13   Noted that clarification as to the number of modules proposed in respect of a nominated external examiner, and as to the involvement of another external examiner, had been obtained and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.2.5)

3.14   Noted that, while consideration had been given to using resit category 2 as a means of addressing a request in respect of the BSc in Nursing, the BSc programme team decided, following extensive discussion, that this would not be a desirable course of action. (Item 6.3.1)

3.15   Noted that a School had considered an issue in respect of resit categories and had been informed by the USC of the necessity of maintain the current procedures (on the basis that the option of using resit category 3 is not precluded). (Item 6.1.2)

3.16   Noted that a request by a School based on external examiner observations would be discussed further within the Faculty and that an update would be provided to the USC as soon as possible. (Item 7.1)

3.17   Agreed that the online location of the policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning would be notified to Academic Council, Programme Chairs and Faculty Managers. Agreed that a mechanism was needed for keeping records of individual School RPL policies. Noted that such policies might usefully be adverted to in the context of annual and periodic programme reviews and that the resource requirements at central University level for the management of RPL, including the tracking of such policies, were under consideration. (Items 8.2 and 8.3)

4.   **Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 3 November 2011**

4.1   Approved. The following were noted:
- with the inception of the revised *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*, the responsibility for approving changes to supervisory arrangements now lies with Faculties; the fitness for purpose of the revised system will be reviewed at the end of 2011/12

- work will be undertaken to increase the level of understanding, across the University, of the importance of ensuring timely submission of requests for transfer to/confirmation on the PhD register so as to avoid situations in which such requests are not submitted until the student is approaching the submission date for the thesis
- work is ongoing to increase the level of efficiency of the management of Graduate Training Elements, particularly with respect to those offered on an inter-institutional basis
- as a related matter, discussions are ongoing about the sustainability of structured PhD programmes given the adverse economic climate.

4.2   It was <u>noted</u> that discussion would need to be undertaken also with a view to arriving at a shared understanding of which NFQ levels might be appropriate for GTEs. In this context, it was <u>noted</u> that not all training needs are necessarily amenable to being met by taught modules; Dr Looney is in discussion with her counterparts in the other universities with a view to agreeing good practice in the management of non-taught training elements.

4.3   The Chair <u>noted</u> that it would be important to avoid situations in which two (or more) research students from the same School are examined by two (or more) external examiners from the same department in another university within the same academic year. She advised that the Graduate Studies Board should undertake discussion of this issue.

SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES

5.1   Appointment of external examiners

5.1.1   Dr Liz Greene, Queen's University Belfast
           BA in Media Production Management
           <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.2   Dr Joan Livesley, University of Salford
           BSc in Children's and General (Integrated) Nursing
           Higher Diploma in Children's Nursing
           <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.3   Ms Suzanne Denieffe, Waterford Institute of Technology
           BSc in Nursing (Psychiatric)
           <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.4   Dr Michael Brown, Edinburgh Napier University
           BSc in Nursing (Intellectual Disability)
           <u>Approved.</u>

5.1.5   Dr Michael Dunne, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
          Modules in Philosophy in Oscail
          Approved for two years (2011/12 and 2012/13) and subject to the form being
          signed by the Director of Oscail.
5.1.6   Professor Peter Hampson, University of Oxford/University of the West of England
          Modules in Psychology in Oscail
          Approved.
5.1.7   Professor Jacques Haers, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
          MA in Ecology and Religion, All Hallows College
          Approved (noted that the approval covers four years, the final one being 2014/15).
5.1.8   Mr Neil Ó Conaill, Mary Immaculate College of Education, University of Limerick
          Teaching Practice on the Bachelor of Education/Graduate Diploma in Education
          (Primary Teaching), St Patrick's College
          Approved.
5.1.9   Mr Peter Savill, Institute and Faculty of Actuaries nominee with respect to the BSc
          in Actuarial Mathematics
          Noted.[1]
5.1.10 Dr Louis de Paor, National University of Ireland, Galway
          Modules in Irish Studies on the BA in Irish Studies and Religious Studies,
          Mater Dei Institute of Education
          Approved.

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

5.2.1   Professor Bart MacCarthy, University of Nottingham
          MSc in Operations and Technology Management
          Decision deferred pending clarification as to the modules to be examined and the
          proposed duration of the re-appointment. Agreed that, if satisfactory clarification
          were obtained, approval could be effected by means of Chair's action.
5.2.2   Dr Russell Gerrard, City University, London
          BSc in Financial and Actuarial Mathematics
          BSc in Actuarial Mathematics
          Decision deferred pending clarification as to whether the nominee is a programme
          or a module examiner. Agreed that, if satisfactory clarification were obtained,
          approval could be effected by means of Chair's action.
5.2.3   Dr Marian Traynor, Queen's University Belfast
          BSc in Nursing (General)
          Approved.

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[1] Mr Savill is a nominee of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries rather than an external examiner of the
University.

5.2.4   Professor Frederic Adam, University College Cork
         MSc in Management of Internet Systems Strategy
         Approved.
5.2.5   Professor Liam Murphy, University College Dublin
         BSc in Information Systems
         MSc in Management of Internet Systems
         Approved.

6.   Other issues

6.1   Dublin City University Business School

6.1.1   Request for re-admission of a legacy candidate (MBS in Marketing)

         Approved.

6.1.2   Request for re-admission of a legacy candidate (MSc in Investment and Treasury)

         Approved.

6.2   Faculty of Engineering and Computing

6.2.1   Revised programme regulations 2011/12 for Open Opportunities and Common Entry into Engineering programmes

         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.

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)

7.   Marks and Standards

7.1   Recommendations of working group

7.1.1   Noted that account had been taken of all feedback to date, including the recent
         feedback from the Appeals Board, on the extent to which Marks and Standards are
         clear and easily understandable.

7.1.2 Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 in the covering memorandum were <u>approved.</u> <u>Agreed</u> that the documentation would be submitted to the Academic Council meeting of 8 February 2012 with a request for approval, with the covering memorandum first being rewritten so as to outline the background for the benefit of the Council members. <u>Agreed</u> that the revised Marks and Standards would be operational from a date (to be identified and publicised) after the February Progression and Awards Board meetings and the promulgation of the associated examination results. <u>Agreed</u> that, in the event that any Faculty had a Teaching and Learning/Education Committee meeting prior to the 8 February 2012 meeting of Academic Council, the opportunity should be taken to explain to the meeting that the proposed changes relate to the wording, but not to the substance, of Marks and Standards. <u>Agreed</u> that not only the Marks and Standards but also the FAQ document would be scrutinised for typographical errors.

7.1.3 With respect to the query raised by the working group about Section 5.1.2, it was <u>noted</u> that a variety of opinions exists as to the desirability of amending it and <u>agreed</u> that the issue would be considered by the Faculty Teaching and Learning/ Education Committees with a view to further discussion by the USC at an appropriate time.

7.1.4 With respect to the query raised by the working group about Section 7.1, it was <u>noted</u> that discussion of the issues would need to take account of the existing ITS Calculate rules as well as of the impact the section has had on the practices in some Schools in terms of computing marks. It was <u>agreed</u> that the issue would be considered by the Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees with a view to further discussion by the USC at an appropriate time.

7.1.5 The Chair thanked the members of the working group for the very considerable work they had carried out in relation to the revisions to the wording of Marks and Standards. It was <u>agreed</u> that the possibility of keeping the working group on standby for future work relating to Marks and Standards (albeit potentially on the basis of a rolling membership) should be considered and that a decision on this would be taken at the 1 March 2012 meeting of the USC. It was <u>noted</u> also, however, that it would be important to minimise the amount of work that would need to be carried out in relation to Marks and Standards in the foreseeable future.

7.2   Revised proposals on module exemptions

<u>Approved</u> in principle. <u>Agreed</u>, however, that further work needed to be undertaken with respect to the technical issues relating to registration and the associated resources that might be required. <u>Agreed</u> also that further discussion was required in Faculties and with Registry with respect to a number of more general issues such as the implications of the proposals for continuous programmes and procedures for

ensuring that students complete the requisite number of credits towards an award notwithstanding the fact that module exemptions may have been granted. (Noted, in connection with the latter issue, that while the Diploma Supplement may show that a student appears not to have undertaken all the requisite credits the transcript of results will make the background clear). Agreed that an update on the progress of the discussions would be given to the USC at its meeting of 1 March 2012.

8.   Legacy candidates

8.1   Progress of legacy candidates re-admitted to date

Noted that the majority of such candidates admitted to date had succeeded, or in the case of more recent candidates were well on the way to succeeding, in completing their programmes. Agreed that it would be important to remain alert to the possibility that a candidate might submit a second request for re-admission after a further lapse of time, and agreed that the re-admission request form would be amended to include a question designed to facilitate the identification of any such second requests.

8.2   Revised proposals on re-admission (Oscail)

Deferred to the 1 March 2012 meeting of the USC.

9.   External examiners: proposals on management of communication and engagement

Noted that it would be important to ensure appropriate consistency of practice across the University in respect of this issue. Noted that the issue was linked with the ongoing work in respect of the online system for managing external examiners' reports (see Item 3.5 above). Agreed that the document would be discussed in Faculties with a view to the development of recommendations for submission to the USC at its meeting of 12 April 2012.

10.   Feedback to students

10.1   The Chair expressed appreciation to the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education, on behalf of the USC, for the significant work they had done in carrying out the survey of current practice. She noted that the summary of results had been made available to the Education Committee.

10.2   In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:
- much positive work is taking place in relation to feedback, and this fact should not be lost sight of
- examples of good practice are available (e.g. the system used in Oscail and the template used by the Open University)
- the survey results indicate a number of recurring themes, such as the fact that one-to-one feedback appears to be the most effective type and the related fact that time pressures tend to militate against the provision of such feedback to the extent that would be ideal
- having research students give feedback may assist in their professional development and save time for academic staff; however, the potential exists that inappropriate feedback may be given, and if academic staff have to supervise the process this negates any advantages in terms of saving time
- training and support for research students and, ideally, for all those engaged in giving feedback would be desirable
- there is now a reference to feedback in the title of the online module on online assessment due to be offered to academic staff in March 2012
- in discussing approaches and mechanisms relating to feedback, account needs to be taken of the volume of assessment
- the concept of feed forward should also be factored into discussions
- account also needs to be taken of the importance of demonstrating to students how the desired standards are to be achieved.

10.3   It was <u>agreed</u> that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education would set up a working group to consider what constitutes good practice in respect of feedback and develop recommendations for USC consideration with a view, ultimately, to the establishment of University guidelines and, to the extent possible, support mechanisms. The membership of this group will include, but not necessarily be confined to, the student convenor for each Faculty, representatives of Oscail and the Learning Innovation Unit and academic staff with relevant research interests, as well as the Associate Deans.

11.   Issues relating to the Teaching Council

11.1   The Chair <u>noted</u> that a new CEO was due to be appointed to the Council. Meanwhile, the IUA Registrars had met the Acting CEO on 23 January 2012 and had agreed to set up a joint working group to discuss the range of current issues that have given rise to disquiet in the universities. The USC will be kept apprised of developments. The Chair <u>noted</u> too that Dr Joe O'Hara, Head of the School of Education Studies, was due to join the Council as one of the university representatives and that consideration was being given to identifying the new

representative of the Colleges of Education (the individual is to be selected from one of Mater Dei Institute of Education, the National College of Art and Design and St Angela's College, Sligo). Dr O'Hara had prepared a very useful briefing note for the meeting of 23 January 2012; this note will be circulated to the USC. The Chair has extensive background documentation on the issues, and USC members are welcome to avail of this should they need to. Such material may be collected from the Chair's office within the next week or so.

11.2   It was <u>noted</u> that the document entitled *Qualifications Requirements for Entry onto a Programme of Initial Teacher Education (Post-Primary)* is subject to ongoing change without the changes necessarily being communicated to higher education institutions.

12.   Any other business

It was <u>noted</u> that the publication of all examination papers containing multiple choice questions had the potential to lead to a situation in which students could familiarise themselves with the full range of potential questions and engage in rote learning to master all the potential answers. It was suggested that an alternative might be to publish only a sample of such papers. It was <u>agreed</u> that Ms McMorrow would conduct a review of the extent to which such papers exist on line and report the findings to the USC so that it could be established if action in relation to the issue were required.

Date of next meeting:

1 March 2012
9.00 a.m. in A204

Signed: _____   Date: _____
                Chair