

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 2 October 2013

2.00-4.00 p.m. in A204

- Present:** Professor Eithne Guilfoyle (Chair), Dr Claire Bohan,
Dr John Doyle, Mr Billy Kelly, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary),
Professor Barry McMullin, Mr Martin Molony,
Mr Ciarán O'Connor, Dr Anne Sinnott, Dr Sheelagh Wickham
- Apologies:** Professor John Costello, Professor Alan Harvey, Dr Sarah Ingle,
Dr Lisa Looney, Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh
- In attendance:** Ms Aisling McKenna

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of two submissions under Item 9.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 4 September 2013

The minutes were approved subject to the inclusion of the name of Dr John Doyle in this list of those who had submitted apologies for absence. They were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** It was noted that several matters which would ordinarily be listed as matters arising from the minutes had been subsumed into the paper for Item 8 (on EC goals).

- 3.2** Ms McKenna noted that she had set up a folder, with subfolders, on Google Drive to make available to EC members and Programme Chairs the various reports she produces for the EC, as well as relevant associated documentation. She undertook to make a table of contents available. (Item 3.4)
- 3.3** It was noted that the HEA quality framework on PhD education would be circulated to the EC when it became available. (Item 3.6)
- 3.4** Mr Kelly noted that he, Dr Bohan and Mr O'Connor were in the process of drafting a protocol relating to the use of students' mobile telephone numbers. With respect to the use of such numbers following graduation, it was noted that it is permissible to do so where information is being gathered for a statutory purpose (as with HEA First Destination returns). The Chair undertook to discuss the implications of possible wider use of alumni contact details with Mr Noel Prior, the Data Protection Officer. (Item 3.7)
- 3.5** It was noted that the term 'Generation 21' would henceforth function as an overarching description covering a number of initiatives: study abroad, the Uaneen Module, INTRA, graduate attributes and e-portfolios. It was noted that the e-portfolios (using a system called Moople) would be launched in the week beginning 21 October 2013, initially to first-year undergraduate students. Considerable work on this initiative took place in Summer 2013, and a presentation on progress to date will be made to the EC at its meeting of 6 November 2013. The need to keep the term 'Generation 21' under review to forestall the risk of confusion with the year 2021 was noted. (Item 3.11)
- 3.6** With respect to final decisions about ownership issues relating to Annual Programme Review and Periodic Programme Review, it was noted that the Chair and the Director of Quality Promotion intended to hold a discussion. (Item 3.12)
- 3.7** It was noted that the meeting of the Accreditation Board for the proposed MSc in Chronic Disease Management would take place on 18 October 2013. (Item 3.13)
- 3.8** It was agreed that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education would discuss the issues relating to the policy on assessment and make recommendations to the EC as appropriate. (Item 3.15)
- 3.9** It was noted that the component strategic plans, to accompany *Transforming Lives and Societies*, were in the final stage of preparation with a view to standardisation of style and presentation. (Item 3.16)

- 3.10** It was noted that the working group on approval procedures would shortly begin its activities. (Item 7.2)

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Update on activities undertaken within the IUA

It was noted that this item would form the basis of substantial discussion at the 6 November 2013 meeting of the EC, as the IUA groups were due to meet on 14 October 2013. The Chair undertook to raise with the Registrars' group the status of the review of capacity in Engineering programmes that had been mooted.

5. Report on the Irish National Student Survey

- 5.1** In introducing the report, Ms McKenna noted that the survey would henceforth be known as Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE). The following were noted in the course of the presentation and the ensuing discussion:
- DCU has broadly similar outcomes to the other Irish universities
 - experience elsewhere (e.g. in Australia) indicates that scores rise as surveys become embedded nationally
 - student retention issues remain critically important
 - in 2012/13, two of the usual DCU student surveys (the first-year student experience survey and the academic programme survey) were suspended so as not to overload students with surveys; notwithstanding the relatively good response rate in the University the question remains how best to incentivise students to participate in future surveys; the 2014 ISSE will take place in February rather than (as was the case in 2013) April, and this is likely to be conducive to a good response rate
 - the uses to which the findings will, or can, be put in future are of significant interest both to the University and sectorally.
- 5.2** Ms McKenna undertook to conduct further analysis on the findings relating to staff-student interaction and to provide information on the overall Irish participation rate relative to that of other countries. She noted that she intended to make a presentation on the findings to the Heads' and Deans' group. Dr Wickham is to share the findings with the group of Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education.

6. Report on examination performance 2012/13

6.1 In the course of the presentation of this report and the ensuing discussion, the following were noted:

- the total number of students passing years has increased, but the proportion of passing to failing students has decreased
- Mathematics modules continue to pose challenges for students; the effects of bonus points for Higher Level Leaving Certificate Mathematics, which have led to increased numbers of students entering DCU having taken Mathematics at Higher Level, will become apparent over time
- the same trends with respect to ‘at risk’ students are apparent as in previous years: broadly, those who progress with their cohort have a significantly greater chance of ultimate success in their studies than those who do not (indeed, those who progress with their cohort achieve the same, in academic terms, in the final years of their programmes as those never deemed at risk)
- it is possible that reductions in overall numbers of modules per programme, where this has occurred and even allowing for the fact that the overall credit rating remains the same, has disincentivised some more ambitious students

6.2 It was agreed to establish a short-life working group to examine issues relating to a small number of modules which appear to have persistently high failure rates.

6.3 To ensure that the broader issues relating to retention are discussed appropriately, it was agreed to incorporate retention into the EC goals (see Item 8 below).

6.4 It was agreed also to insert a question into the Periodic Programme Review documentation (see also Item 7 below) to ascertain the extent to which the programme under review has a retention rate comparable with other programmes.

7. Report on Periodic Programme Review activities undertaken in 2012/13 and planned for 2013/14

Mr Kelly noted that he was finalising discussions with Faculties about their immediate and medium-term plans for PPR and would present a report on the outcome to the EC at its meeting of 6 November 2013.

8. EC goals 2013/14: updated list

- 8.1** It was noted that the list had been updated on the basis of the discussion at the meeting of 4 September 2013. It was agreed that the most fruitful approach to finalising it would be to check it against the list of strategic objectives (relating to both Teaching and Learning and other issues) presented to Governing Authority at its meeting of 13 June 2013, and the Chair undertook to do this in consultation with Mr Kelly and Ms McKenna. The resulting document will be submitted for final consideration and sign-off by the EC at its meeting of 6 November 2013.
- 8.2** It was suggested that it might be helpful to divide the EC goals into shorter- and longer-term goals.
- 8.3** The context of the development of one specific issue in the list of goals, i.e. QuEST, was noted.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

No items.

9. Any other business

- 9.1** It was noted that the guiding principles with regard to university selection and entry had been approved by the Academic Councils of all the universities (with DCU Academic Council having given approval at its meeting of 5 June 2013). It was agreed that the Chair and Mr Kelly would meet Ms Celine Jameson, Student Enrolment Officer, to discuss the implications of the approval for the University in particular as well as for the sector more generally. It was noted in this connection that, as had been mentioned at the meeting of 4 September 2013 in the context of EC goals (Item 6.1 of the minutes of this meeting refers), the Chair intended to establish a working group to examine issues relating to non-CAO admission.
- 9.2** The implications for the University of the recent Teaching Council stipulation of a 15:1 student:staff ratio for programmes in teacher education were noted.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 6 November 2013, 2.00 p.m. in A204

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____