

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday 6 March 2013

2.00-4.25 p.m. in A204

Present: Professor Eithne Guilfoyle (Chair), Mr Aaron Clogher, Professor John Costello, Dr John Doyle, Dr Sarah Ingle, Mr Billy Kelly, Dr Lisa Looney, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Professor Barry McMullin, Mr Martin Molony, Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, Dr Anne Sinnott, Dr Sheelagh Wickham

Apologies: Dr Claire Bohan

In attendance: Ms Aisling McKenna

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 6 February 2013

The minutes were confirmed and were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Information on first-year undergraduate student examination performance 2010-2013 was noted. In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:
- it is crucially important to foster a sense of engagement with the programme in students from the outset of their studies

- as was previously noted by the EC (Item 3.11 of the minutes of the meeting of 7 November 2012 refers), it might be helpful for the co-ordinators of modules for which the pattern of marks tends to differ from the norm to meet one another
- it should none the less be borne in mind that the factors affecting student performance in modules are many and complex and not always amenable to action on the part of the module co-ordinator
- there is scope for discussion about the extent to which it should be expected that there will be a certain failure rate.

Ms McKenna is to make available to the Deans information on the examination performance of all students. It was noted that examination performance data would henceforth be made available to the Education Committee twice a year, i.e. at the March and October meetings, and would incorporate details of the numbers of awards made at each grade as well as focusing on trends and comparators. (Item 5 from the meeting of 3 October 2012)

- 3.2** It was noted that the title ‘BSc in Computational Problem-Solving and Software Development’ for the new undergraduate programme in the School of Computing had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 13 February 2013. (Item 3.1)
- 3.3** Ms McKenna undertook to make available to the Deans, on request, information about prior Leaving Certificate performance of students, per individual programme, in the past 3-5 years. (Item 3.3)
- 3.4** It was noted that the EC would be apprised, as appropriate, of progress/completion in respect of a range of ongoing issues. (Item 3.4)
- 3.5** With respect to the involvement of external institutions in programmes offered by the University, it was agreed to set up a short-life working group to make recommendations about the classification of types of relationship and the associated processes. The importance of early dialogue with the Registry, where programmes with external partners were being proposed, was noted, as was the recent exercise the Registry had conducted to ascertain the monetary cost (as distinct from the cost in terms of other inputs such as staff time) of registering a student. It was noted also that a relevant document from St Patrick’s College had been made available to Dr Looney by Dr Mac Murchaidh. (Items 3.5 and 5.1)
- 3.6** It was noted, with respect to recommendations about non-major awards, that final proposals would be submitted for the consideration of the EC as soon as possible. (Item 3.7)

- 3.7** It was noted that the outcome of the discussion about ethical review of undergraduate research proposals would shortly be conveyed to the Chair of the REC, for information. (Item 3.8)
- 3.8** It was noted that amendments would shortly be made to the withdrawal form (*R27 – Notification of Withdrawal from a Course*) with a view to eliciting more nuanced information than is available at present about students' reasons for withdrawing from the University. (Item 3.9)
- 3.9** It was noted that Business Intelligence was likely to be used for making available the proposed online repository of reports from the Institutional Research and Analysis Office. (Item 3.10)
- 3.10** It was noted that the reworded policy on joint research supervision and awards had been approved by Executive. (Item 3.11)
- 3.11** It was noted that the proposed 3U Partnership MEng in Healthcare Technologies had been successful at accreditation on 22 February 2013. Relevant documentation is to be submitted for the approval of DCU Academic Council in the usual way (at the meeting of Council of 10 April 2013) but, for the first time, such documentation is also to be submitted for approval by the appropriate committees in NUIM and RCSI. An additional member of the Accreditation Board had been approved by the EC, on an electronic basis, on 13 February 2013. (Item 3.13)
- 3.12** The validation proposal in respect of the proposed MSc in Chronic Disease Management, as revised following the EC meeting of 6 February 2013, was approved. (Item 3.15)
- 3.13** It was noted that the Chair intended to write a report for the Senior Management Group which would note the completion of a number of AFI objectives and highlight the fact that the completion of the remainder, especially those relating to flexibility of provision, would entail a significant upgrading of the University management information system. It was noted also that feedback from Faculties about the proposals for an information system for research students, and the outcome of discussions about the University management information system in the context of AFI, had been conveyed to the Chair. (Item 4.2.3)

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

4. Update on activities undertaken within the IUA

No specific activities were noted as needing to be the subject of an update at this time. It was noted that the HEA quality framework on PhD education would be circulated to the EC when it became available.

5. Update on the Irish National Student Survey

It was noted that this survey was now live. Notwithstanding the fact that comprehensive information was provided to stakeholders within the University, the response rate to date has been modest; it is to be hoped that this situation will improve lest a relative paucity of responses might reflect poorly on the University. It was noted that survey results, even where not published by the University, could be accessed by means of Freedom of Information requests.

6. EC goals 2013

6.1 Undergraduate education and postgraduate education: draft proposals on rationalisation of provision

6.1.1 The draft proposals were noted. In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- it will be very important to have a system of prioritising programmes/modules in terms of their suitability for retention
- it would be very helpful for Deans to be in a position to ascertain the cost of individual modules
- difficulties can arise where a programme which is financially advantageous to the University is not in fact profitable for the Faculty which has proposed it
- it may prove helpful to reiterate the distinction between programmes and awards and to prioritise the concept of a range of common modules across programmes, supplemented by modules in specific subject areas which will lead to specific awards
- the role of the EC is not to scrutinise particular programmes/modules in detail but to propose criteria on which rationalisation decisions can be based
- in developing criteria, it is likely to prove helpful to conceptualise two types of data: quantitative data such as numbers and academic standard of applicants, and broader information relating to the institutional, regional and national context in which the programme/module is offered.

6.1.2 It was agreed that the Chair and Ms McKenna would meet to draft criteria and that the Chair would discuss issues relating to costing with Mr Eamonn Cuggy, Finance Officer. The draft documentation would then be sent for comment to Faculty Management Boards before being submitted for the attention of the Senior Management Group.

6.2 Updates on other goals

Progress in respect of other goals was noted.

7. Draft Teaching and Learning strategic plan

7.1 The Chair noted that this plan falls under the remit not of her own Office exclusively but of various members of the Senior Management Group. She is to draft a brief mission and vision statement, in consultation with Mr Kelly and Dr Looney, and make it available to the EC.

7.2 It was noted that the template made available for the plan did not facilitate the prioritisation of projects or the identification of projects the carrying out of which would be a prerequisite for the undertaking of others.

7.3 The Chair invited the EC membership to comment further on the draft should they wish, within a short timeframe (as the plan is due for completion by the end of March 2013). Comments and suggestions with respect to the key performance indicators will be especially welcome.

8. Report on ‘at-risk’ students

Ms McKenna, in presenting the report, noted the increased numbers of students deemed ‘at risk’ over the period under consideration and the fact that the reasons for this are likely to require further analysis, given that the students’ entry profile remains largely unchanged and that their cut-off points on entry tend to be reasonably high. She undertook to make the per-Faculty information available to the Deans. It was suggested that consideration be given to the current method of identifying ‘at-risk’ students with a view to determining its ongoing fitness for purpose. The Chair expressed appreciation to Ms McKenna, on behalf of the EC, for her work in preparing the report.

9. Report from the working group on HEA First Destinations information

Noting the recommendations of the working group, Ms McKenna expressed appreciation to its members for their detailed engagement with the issues. It was noted that action would be taken by the University to enable the use of mobile telephones to contact students in relation to the survey and that a protocol surrounding such use would be drawn up. A potential tension between, on the one hand, data protection requirements and, on the other, the need to track graduates over the course of their careers was noted. One possible way of engaging with this issue would be to work towards the integration of the student/graduate records on ITS and the database used by DCU Alumni. To this end, the Chair undertook to forward the working group's recommendations to the Chief Operating Officer, Dr Declan Raftery, with a view to initiating discussion about possible integration.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME- AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES**10. Proposed MSc in Humanitarian Logistics and Emergency Management (3U Partnership)**

Approved.

11. Proposed stand-alone module in the School of Nursing and Human Sciences: Recovery Coaching and Addiction in the Community

Approved.

12. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 3 April 2013, 2.00 p.m. in A204

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____