

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Wednesday 13 October 2021

2.00 p.m. – 4.20 p.m. via Zoom

- Present:** Dr Sarahjane Belton, Professor Mark Brown, Professor Derek Hand, Ms Margaret Irwin-Bannon (Secretary), Mr Billy Kelly, Dr Anna Logan, Professor Anne Looney, Professor Lisa Looney (Chair), Ms Aisling McKenna, Ms Pauline Mooney, Professor Colm O’Gorman, Professor Joseph Stokes and Dr Blánaid White
- Apologies:** Dr Claire Bohan, Ms Jennifer Bruton, Professor Michelle Butler, Ms Kate Goodman, and Professor Greg Hughes
- In attendance** Dr Jing Burgi-Tian, Prof Mairéad Nic Ghiolla Mhichil (Item 6), Mr James Galvin (Item 7), Dr Niamh O’Sullivan (Items 8 and 9)

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted, subject to the inclusion of one item under AOB.

2. Minutes of the meeting of Education Committee, 15 September 2021

The minutes of 15 September 2021 were approved and it was noted the final version would be formally signed at a later date.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of 15 September 2021

- 3.1 It was noted that a discussion on Joint, Double (Multiple) and Dual Awards is on the agenda of this meeting (Item 4).
- 3.2 It was noted that the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee: Stronger Connections with Further Education had been amended and a final version has been lodged with the Academic Affairs Office (Item 7.2).
- 3.3 It was noted that the finalised documentation for the BSc in Bioprocessing had been submitted, reflecting that the BSc in Bioprocessing is an exit award from the BSc in Biotechnology (Item 8).

- 3.4 It was noted that the finalised documentation for the Graduate Certificate in Strategic Leadership had been submitted, reflecting that the Graduate Certificate is a minor award (Item 9).
- 3.5 It was noted that two nominees to participate in the Accreditation Board for the BSc in Global Challenges were approved by Chair's action, 15 September 2021.
- 3.6 It was noted that a draft institutional employability statement and template for the completion of Faculty-level employability statements will be on the agenda of the November 2021 meeting of Education Committee (Item 3.1).
- 3.9 It was noted that an alternative proposal for an exit award from the BEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering is ongoing (Item 3.9).
- 3.10 It was noted that work with regard to the provision of an overview of Education Committee/Vice-President for Academic Affairs/Registrar commitments and activities, and a proposed cycle for reporting to Education Committee, is ongoing (Item 3.10).

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION/NOTING

4. Strategic academic initiatives

4.1 *Update on Transversal Skills from the Strategic Learning Innovation Project (SLIP) Steering Group*

The Dean of Strategic Learning Innovation provided an update on the Transversal Skills shortlisting process and outcome. Following extensive consultation and research a long-list of transversal skills to make up the framework has been proposed and agreed by the Strategic Learning Innovation Project Steering Group.

In the discussion which followed the following recommendations and comments were noted:

- It was noted, in adopting skills or attributes, that these must be owned by the whole community for them to be effective. It was also noted, having developed DCU's Graduate Attributes, there is a range of institutional knowledge that can be utilised in the roll-out and embedding of the new transversal skills framework.
- It was emphasised, in the context of integrating transversal skills, that it should be the learning outcomes rather than the content *per se* which is the focus.
- It was noted that there was no reference to sustainable development/civic skills in the proposed listing. In addition, under the heading of 'tools for thriving', *citizenship* is absent. More detailed descriptions of the skills may indicate these as being integral.
- It was asked if, and how, the attainment of these goals would be measured. It was noted in the response to this question that this was a key consideration for the Director of Transversal Skills and there had been extensive research completed on international best practice and how the development of transversal skills could be measured i.e. the density and level of competence.
- That there should be a process to update and refresh transversal skills.
- It was noted that as an institution DCU would need to examine in parallel, its preparedness

to support students in developing these skills.

The Chair thanked all DCU colleagues involved, and also external colleagues who have contributed to the development of the transversal skills framework to date.

4.2 **Minutes of Strategic Learning Innovation Project Steering Group**

Meeting 1: Part A: 31 May 2021. The minutes were approved, subject to one minor amendment.

Meeting 2: Part B: 17 June 2021. The minutes were approved.

5. **Joint, Double (Multiple) and Dual Awards position paper (as previously circulated)**

It was noted that feedback was due from a number of Faculties, and confirmed that feedback had been provided from members of the Graduate Research Studies Board. The Chair outlined that it is intended to submit a document to Education Committee in November 2021 which will incorporate the feedback received from Faculties and will contain the fundamental building blocks of the parameters, definitions and principles for Joint, Double (Multiple) and Dual awards. It was intended that this document would inform a policy document, which will be circulated to Faculties in advance of final approval by Education Committee over the coming months.

6. **Micro-credentialing in DCU**

The Director of Micro-credential Strategy and Innovation presented on the paper circulated to Education Committee entitled *Micro-credentials in DCU-Definitions and Updated processes* which outlined the significant DCU involvement in micro-credentials both at a National, European and International level.

The paper proposed the following:

1. To seek approval for the adoption of the European Commissions' working definition of micro-credentials
2. Proposed DCU micro-credential characteristics and the delineation between verified and validated learning offerings in this context
3. Updated approval processes as set out in Appendix A
4. That it is intended through the Micro-credential Institutional Working Group to provide due consideration to further strategic and implementation issues and questions in this domain and for the Group to develop position papers for consideration by appropriate University Committees.

In the discussion which followed, the following were noted:

- The reporting and financial model (how students would be counted), has not yet been defined and would be one of the considerations of the Micro-credentials Institutional Working Group
- Connected to point one above, it was queried if consideration had been given to how resource flow would be managed in terms of the cost of academic time
- That micro-credential development is platform agnostic
- It would be important that it is emphasised that the process is very strongly rooted in the Faculties and that the initiatives are Faculty, rather than individually led. The Director of Micro-credential Strategy and Innovation responded that she was very cognisant of the role of the Faculties, when considering the development of the approval processes.
- The 'earn as you learn' market is a growing one and micro-credentials are filling that niche. The current platform with which DCU has a strategic partnership offers a huge international on-line market.
- It was noted that there will need to be a balance between micro-credential production and the need to maintain quality assured standards. The need for formal, quality assessment was emphasised.
- It was agreed that the previously agreed ECTS credits for micro-credentials would remain 'normally 5-7.5 credits'. This would allow some flexibility and maintain alignment with sector developments.

Following the discussion, it was agreed that the proposals as set out in the paper would be a 'point in time' version of DCU's position on micro-credentials.

The Chair thanked the Director of Micro-credential Strategy and Innovation for the clarity and thoroughness of the presentation.

7. Sport Ireland's Dual Career Accreditation Guiding Principles and Criteria for Student Athlete Support

Education Committee was asked to consider a proposal from Sport Ireland Institute that the university apply for accreditation, recognising implementation of a proposed model of good practice in dual career support to high performance athletes.

Mr James Galvin, Director of Sports and Wellbeing provided some context on existing practice, outlining that DCU has an existing regulation document, agreed in 2019, which provides for academic flexibility for elite athletes, and which has been working well. It applies to a small number of athletes competing internationally at the highest levels. It was noted that that the proposal as circulated to the Universities had not had input from Higher Education Institutions and that this was regrettable. The university's goal to continue to build on a strong relationship with Sport Ireland and the international governing bodies of sport was emphasised.

In the discussion which followed the following comments were noted:

- In the main it was felt the elements needed for 'accreditation' would not be an improvement on existing accommodations made for elite athletes

- It was noted that as an institution DCU engages with a great deal of external professional accreditation and this proposed process does not represent the rigour that would be expected in an accreditation process. It was noted that the language and tone used in the proposal is vague and does not demonstrate an understanding of the sector.
- It was further highlighted that the student well-being and welfare is not referenced in the document, and this would be so important.
- An appropriate priority for the elite athlete of successful completion of their chosen academic programme is not apparent in the documents.
- It was highlighted that there are some positives in the document in that it provides a clear structure in terms of representatives in each school and faculty and there would be an openness to continuing the dialogue around this aspect.

Education Committee agreed that DCU remains very supportive of maintaining a good working relationship with Sport Ireland and it was proposed that based on the discussion, the Director of Sports and Wellbeing would liaise with the Vice President for Academic Affairs (Registrar) about next steps in responding to the invitation to engage with the proposed process.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

8. Faculty of Science and Health: Validation proposal: MSc in Child and Family Health and Wellbeing

Following discussion of the proposal, Education Committee indicated that it was broadly in favour of the programme as outlined subject to the programme proposers addressing the following issues which were raised:

- That there would be clarity about what blended delivery meant e.g. are students predominantly remote and have block attendance, is delivery mixed at module level?
- It was felt that the Programme Learning outcomes were expressed more in the language of NFQ level 8 rather than level 9 and it was requested that these would be revised.
- It was queried, given the proposed numbers of students if it was viable to offer optional modules to students.
- With respect to the financial model, it was noted that only one new staff member was costed and proposers were asked to justify this given that the programme involved totally new modules. If there was capacity in the School then this should be articulated. It was also requested that there would be a justification of the proposed number of places i.e. could this be scaled up?
- In the context of the stated intention to examine the feasibility of developing some initial micro-credentials to increase the flexibility for learners it was recommended that programme proposers consult with the Director of Micro-Credential Strategy and Innovation
- It was asked if, given the connection to Education, if consultation had happened in this regard with the DCU Institute of Education
- It was recommended that more detail would be provided with respect to the research dissertation/organisational development project. The point was made that a dissertation module at level 9 is associated with a particular kind of research, and this needed to be elaborated in the description in the context of an organisational development project.

It was agreed that a revised proposal would be considered at the November 2021 meeting of Education Committee.

9. Faculty of Science and Health: Validation proposal: MSc in Health and Social Inclusion

Following discussion of the proposal, Education Committee indicated that it was broadly in favour of the programme as outlined subject to the programme proposers addressing the following issues which were raised:

- With respect to the financial model, it was noted that it was proposed to run the MSc in Health and Social Inclusion on a full-time and part-time basis however only one and a half academic posts were included in the financial model. Proposers were asked to justify this given that the programme involved all new modules.
- In the context of trying to attract international students, it was suggested that there would be more specificity about what blended delivery might mean in practical terms.
- It was felt that the Programme Learning outcomes were expressed more in the language of NFQ level 8 rather than level 9 and it was requested that these would be revised.
- It was recommended that more detail would be provided with respect to the research dissertation/organisational development project. The point was made that a dissertation module at level 9 is associated with a particular kind of research, and this needed to be elaborated in the description in the context of an organisational development project.
- It was noted that the workload for the full-time and part-time cohort in semester 2 was quite similar and it was recommended that some reconfiguration be done to ensure that there was a difference in workload between the two cohorts.

It was agreed that the revised proposal would be considered at the November 2021 meeting of Education Committee.

10. Faculty Periodic Programme Reviews: completed 2020-2021 and planned 2021-2022

The proposed PPR reviews for each Faculty were noted.

It was noted that the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences would confirm the details in the document as submitted.

It was noted that the Institute of Education would focus in the coming year on the Teaching Council re-accreditation of its programmes.

11. DCU Institute of Education: Memorandum of Understanding with Technological University Dublin

The Dean of the DCU Institute of Education notified Education Committee of two proposed collaborative programmes with Technological University Dublin (TUD) which is in support of its strategy to expand the range of concurrent programmes of initial teacher education.

- (i) The Faculty is holding discussions on the development of a programme for teachers of Home Economics in second level schools
- (ii) Consideration is being given to a collaboration on a postgraduate programme for teachers of students with visual impairment which would also involve the TUD. The Department of Education has approached the Institute in this regard and has indicated that it wishes to fund participants

These intended collaborations were noted.

12. Any other business

The Chair outlined that each year Education Committee reviews comparative student exam performance over prior years. The Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, Dr Jing Burgi-Tian, will be preparing data over the coming weeks for presentation to Education Committee at its November meeting. She asked that the Faculties would get in touch with Dr Burgi-Tian should they have any specific requirements with regard to the data. It was suggested that the impact of the pandemic would be one area of focus. It was agreed that Dr Burgi-Tian would circulate a request following the meeting.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Date of next meeting:
Wednesday, 10 November 2021
at 2.00 pm