

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 17 January 2013

9.00-10.20 a.m. in A204

Present: Mr Billy Kelly (Chair), Dr Malcolm Brady, Ms Olivia Bree, Mr Aaron Clogher, Ms Sinéad Ní Chruaí, Dr Mark Glynn, Dr Lisa Looney, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Ms Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Dr Enda McGlynn, Ms Phylomena McMorrough, Dr Anne Morrissey, Mr Paul Sheehan, Ms Annabella Stover, Mr Ray Walshe, Dr Sheelagh Wickham

Apologies: Professor Barbara Flood, Mr Ronan Tobin

On behalf of the University Standards Committee, the Chair welcomed Dr Mark Glynn, recently-appointed Director of the Learning Innovation Unit, to his first meeting, and also welcomed Dr Enda McGlynn, who has succeeded Professor Liam Barry as representative to the USC of the Associate Deans for Research.

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 15 November 2012

The minutes were confirmed subject to the following:

- the addition of Mr Ray Walshe to the list of those who attended the meeting
- the substitution of the words 'counted twice in obtaining an award' for 're-used' in Item 3.3
- the inclusion of the word 'University' between 'City' and 'Business' in Item 3.17.

They were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** It was noted that discussions were in progress with a view to establishing mechanisms for facilitating students in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing to reach the required English-language standard and that information was awaited on the progression rate of students on the pre-Master's Foundation Programme 2011/12 in this regard. (Item 2)
- 3.2** It was noted that discussions were taking place in a School with a view to the development of a proposal for the consideration of the Faculty and the USC that would reflect a recommendation made by external examiners and also be consistent with Marks and Standards. (Item 3.1)
- 3.3** With respect to the policy on Recognition of Prior Learning for admission to taught programmes, it was noted that the Chair and Dr Wickham were in discussion with a view to ensuring its appropriate use in Faculties. (Item 3.2)
- 3.4** The proposed policy on Recognition of Prior Learning for admission to research programmes was approved. Several aspects of it were noted: it is aimed at building on existing good practice and providing a balance between maintenance of standards and flexibility of approach; it prioritises local over central decision-making on the basis that expertise as to the appropriateness of prior learning in any given discipline tends to reside locally; the Graduate Studies Board will be notified of decisions on admission using RPL; it will normally be expected that admission using RPL will be to the Master's register only, but the option of admission, in exceptional cases, to the PhD-track or PhD registers exists (and trends in this respect, if they emerge, will be monitored by the GSB). Dr Looney thanked Dr Wickham for making available to her the template used for RPL admission to taught programmes. It was noted that admissions records are kept by the University for thirteen months only, and agreed that the desirability of this limit, from an RPL perspective, should be discussed by relevant staff members outside the context of the meeting. It was noted that, with respect to research students admitted through RPL, the thirteen-month limit should at least ensure that their records are available until after the transfer to/confirmation on the PhD register, where relevant. It was noted that, with respect to taught programmes, the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education had undertaken to keep a record of RPL admissions in their Faculties. (Item 3.2)

- 3.5** It was noted that, at a future meeting, the USC would discuss the issue of registering and recording module exemptions, taking into account the fact that credits cannot be counted twice in obtaining an award and that it might be useful to make a distinction between exempting a student from having to obtain certain credits and actually awarding him/her the credits. (Item 3.3)
- 3.6** It was noted that the possibility of providing central support for in-module examinations, given appropriate resources, would be kept under review. (Item 3.4)
- 3.7** It was noted that issues relating to external examining were being discussed in the context of the restructuring of the postgraduate framework in Psychotherapy in the School of Nursing and Human Sciences. (Item 3.5)
- 3.8** With respect to a range of issues that had arisen relating to external examiners, it was noted that they would be discussed by a group of relevant staff members at a meeting to be held on 29 January 2013. The issue of the optimum length post-retirement within which an individual can be nominated as an external examiner will be included in the group's discussions. It was noted that investigation had shown that, over the past few years (both before and after the introduction of the current version of *Regulations and guidelines: external examiners for taught programmes/modules*), there had been very little in the way of requests to nominate two external examiners from the same institution in the same year. (See also Item 5.1 below.) (Items 3.6 and 5)
- 3.9** It was noted that the policy on assessment was under development. (Item 3.9)
- 3.10** It was noted that the USC terms of reference would be submitted for the consideration of Academic Council as soon as possible. (Item 3.10)
- 3.11** It was noted that further discussion on the placing of historical qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications, with particular reference to the linked colleges, would take place in due course. (Item 3.12)
- 3.12** It was noted that an issue relating to a candidate who had requested re-admission on a legacy basis would be discussed and resolved within the relevant Faculty. (Item 3.19)
- 3.13** It was noted that the working group on legacy re-admission requests had been set up and was due to hold its first meeting on 23 January 2013. (Items 3.20 and 6)

- 3.14** It was noted that discussions were in progress about Marks and Standards issues relating to continuing professional development programmes in St Patrick's College and that relevant recommendations would be made to the USC as soon as possible. (Item 3.21)
- 3.15** It was noted that discussions about the policy on plagiarism were being conducted by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and a representative of Oscail. (Item 3.22)
- 3.16** It was noted that the Chair had discussed with a School the decision to approve two external examiners for one year only, on the basis that they both came from the same institution. With respect to the request from the School that the decision be reconsidered, it was noted that this was not possible within *Regulations and guidelines: external examiners for taught programmes/modules* as they currently stand. (Items 5.1.2 and 5.1.4)
- 3.17** It was noted, with respect to an external examiner, that information about prior experience had been obtained and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.7)
- 3.18** It was noted that a School had been informed that more specific information on an EE1 (nomination of external examiner) form would have been desirable. (Item 5.1.8)
- 3.19** It was noted, with respect to two external examiners, that further information about prior experience had been obtained. (Items 5.1.9 and 5.1.13)
- 3.20** It was noted that, following discussion with a School, the following external examiner nominations stood approved:
Dr Michael Manzke, Trinity College Dublin – approved for 2012/13.
Dr Declan O'Sullivan, Trinity College Dublin – approved for 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16.
(Items 5.1.10, 5.1.11 and 5.1.15)
- 3.21** It was noted that clarification had been obtained as to the titles of the programmes to be examined by an external examiner and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.18)
- 3.22** It was noted that clarification had been obtained that a nominated external examiner was due to be a programme examiner for the MSc in Computer-aided Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.20)

- 3.23** It was noted, with respect to a nominated external examiner, that further information about prior experience had been obtained and the nomination had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.1.22)
- 3.24** It was noted that the list of modules for which an external examiner is henceforth to be responsible had been obtained and the request for renewal of appointment had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 5.2.2)
- 3.25** With respect to a candidate seeking re-admission to a programme on a legacy basis, it was noted that the relevant Faculty had approved the request and that the proposed completion timeframe was considered appropriate, and the request was therefore deemed approved (by the USC). (Item 6.1.1)
- 3.26** With respect to a candidate seeking re-admission to a programme on a legacy basis, it was noted that the relevant Faculty had approved the request, and it was therefore deemed approved (by the USC). (Item 6.1.2)
- 3.27** It was noted that an issue relating to NARIC required further discussion with the International Office and that it would be submitted again for the consideration of the USC at its meeting of 28 February 2013. (Item 10)
- 3.28** It was noted that temporary revised external examiner arrangements in the School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, to allow examining work to continue notwithstanding the illness of one examiner, had been approved by Chair's action on 16 November 2012.
- 3.29** It was noted that a request from a candidate for re-admission to the MA in International Relations (part-time) programme on a legacy basis had been approved by Chair's action on 17 November 2012.
- 3.30** It was noted that a request from a candidate for re-admission to the BSc in Computer Applications (Information Systems) on a legacy basis had been approved by Chair's action on 29 November 2012.

4. Minutes of the Graduate Studies Board meeting of 18 October 2012

Approved. The following were noted:

- external examiner nominations/approvals are reviewed on an ongoing basis with the object of facilitating good practice in terms of selection of examiners, particularly with respect to issues of reciprocity between the University and other institutions

- the GSB has adopted a practice of reviewing on an annual basis (normally at the October meeting) a summary of actions taken by it in the previous year
- extensive discussions about Graduate Researcher Education have taken place with a range of stakeholders, and will continue; there are many aspects to this issue, and those of relevance to the USC will be submitted for its consideration as appropriate
- the desirability of having an updated information system for graduate students is accepted in principle by all stakeholders, though funding is likely to prove challenging
- feedback from graduate research students, on the basis of surveys following orientation and exit surveys, indicates broadly positive attitudes to the experience of being supervised, training opportunities and the student experience generally; this tallies with the outcomes of the thematic quality review of the postgraduate student experience undertaken in 2009.

SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES

5.1 Appointment of external examiners

- 5.1.1 Dr Bernard Mahon, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
MSc in Biomedical Diagnostics
Approved.
- 5.1.2 Dr Brigitta Hosea, University of the Arts London
BSc in Multimedia and MSc in Multimedia
Approved.
- 5.1.3 Dr Reiner Dojen, University of Limerick
MSc in Electronic Commerce (Technical)
Approved.
- 5.1.4 Dr Orla McDonnell, University of Limerick
Stand-alone module NS487: Co-operative Learning (School of Nursing and Human Sciences)
Approved.
- 5.1.5 Dr Fiona Chambers, University College Cork
BSc in Physical Education with Biology and BSc in Physical Education with Mathematics
Approved.
- 5.1.6 Professor Aileen Douglas, Trinity College Dublin
Modules in Literature on the BA/Diploma in Humanities, Oscail
Approved.

- 5.1.7 Dr Sharon Flynn, National University of Ireland, Galway
LI501 – DCAD Teaching Online (DCU Staff)
LI502 – Assessment and Feedback in the Online Environment
LI503 – DCAD Teaching Online (Non-DCU Staff)
Approved.

It was noted that, notwithstanding the stipulation from the Education Committee¹ that all stand-alone modules should be the responsibility of a Faculty or of Oscail (this stipulation having been informed by feedback from Faculties and Oscail) some modules such as these three (and the Uaneen Module and a small number of Graduate Training Element modules) fall outside the Faculty structure. It was agreed that this matter would need to be addressed.

It was noted that the following issues would be discussed at the meeting of 29 January 2013 (see Item 3.8 above):

- EE1 (nomination) forms are sometimes submitted after the nominated external examiner has begun work, with the result that the USC's scope in terms of decision-making is constrained
- some forms are lacking in terms of amount of detail, and appropriate information, necessary to provide a firm foundation for a USC decision.

It was agreed that issues relating to communication and engagement with external examiners, which had previously been discussed in Faculties, would also form part of the discussion at the meeting of 29 January 2013.

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

- 5.2.1 Dr Suzanne de Chevigné, Shadye (EHES-CNRS)
Modules on the MSc in Science Communication
Approved.
- 5.2.2 Professor Sheelagh Drudy, University College Dublin
Professional Diploma in Education
Approved.

¹ Item 7.4.1 of the minutes of the EC meeting of 7 December 2011 refers.

6. Other issues**6.1 Dublin City University Business School****6.1.1 Request for re-admission of legacy candidate: MSc in Investment, Treasury and Banking**

Approved.

6.2 Faculty of Engineering and Computing**6.2.1 Request for re-admission of legacy candidate: MEng in Telecommunications Engineering**

Approved subject to a completion date of September 2013.

6.2.2 Request for re-admission of legacy candidate: MEng in Electronic Systems

Approved.

6.3 Faculty of Science and Health**6.3.1 Request for re-admission of legacy candidate: MSc in Advanced Chemical and Pharmaceutical Analysis**

Approved.

6.4 Oscail**6.4.1 Request for re-admission of legacy candidate: MSc in Management of Operations**

Approved. It was noted that there should be an opportunity on the request form to allow the proposer to indicate that the candidate has already graduated with an exit award, if this is so (as in the present case). It was also noted that the fact that the candidate had registered for the thesis, but deferred, would, ideally, have been indicated on the form. The fact that the exit award parchment must be surrendered upon registration for the Master's programme, rather than upon completion of the Master's programme, was also noted.

In a general sense, it was noted that it would be important for Faculties to use the up-to-date version of the form so that the date of original registration would be clear, and important also for them to indicate when all the previous modules had been taken and to indicate all marks for all modules, not just those that had been passed. It was agreed that these matters, as well as the desirability of allowing for an indication on the request form that the candidate has already graduated with an exit award (where relevant), would form part of the discussions of the working group on legacy re-admission requests (see Item 3.14 above).

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)

7. Marks and Standards issues

7.1 Proposal from Oscail for a change to Marks and Standards with respect to the precision mark

In the discussion about this proposal, the following were noted: it is precision marks rather than module marks that are carried forward from year to year; in effect, every programme has yearly progression; it would be helpful to have a more precise definition of what constitutes a ‘continuous’ programme than is available at present. It was agreed that relevant members of the USC would revise the proposal to take account of these issues and would submit the revised proposal to the USC for consideration at its meeting of 30 May 2013.

It was agreed that the May meeting of the USC would, annually, be the meeting to which any and all issues relating to Marks and Standards and *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* would be submitted for final consideration in the academic year with a view to having any consequent regulatory changes approved by Academic Council at its late June meeting, for implementation in the following academic year.

7.2 Requests for derogations from Marks and Standards: Faculty of Science and Health

Approved. It was noted that the requests had been made in order to ensure compliance of the relevant programmes with Teaching Council requirements. Concern was expressed about the exceptionally heavy workloads that were likely to be involved for students, particularly as they move towards the end of the programmes. It was agreed to request the programme teams to engage with this issue in due course with a view to ascertaining if any restructuring (of the current

proposal, just agreed) could be undertaken that would alleviate it. The discussions should incorporate engagement with the Registry, as appropriate and necessary.

8. Remote examinations

It was noted that the two sets of examinations which the USC had permitted to be held remotely were in progress and that the experience of holding them would be analysed with a view to deciding on a more structured process for future reference (as the current examinations had been organised on the basis of *ad hoc* requests and it is not envisaged that any future examinations will be organised on this basis). A set of general guiding principles will be drafted and submitted for the consideration of the USC. Mr Kelly and Ms McMorrow will be involved in the drafting; Oscail will also participate, on the basis of its experience in organising examinations for distance education students; SALIS will also be asked to contribute expertise, on the basis of its experience of having students take examinations in overseas universities. It was agreed that the principles would need to be tightly worded and that, in drafting them, account would need to be taken of resource issues and emerging technologies, as well as of the crucial importance of maintaining excellence in both academic and operational standards.

9. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting:

**28 February 2013
9.00 a.m. in A204**

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____