

## **UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

Thursday 28 February 2013

9.00-10.45 a.m. in A204

**Present:** Mr Billy Kelly (Chair), Dr Malcolm Brady, Ms Olivia Bree, Mr Aaron Clogher, Ms Sinéad Ní Chrualaoi, Professor Barbara Flood, Dr Mark Glynn, Dr Lisa Looney, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Ms Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Dr Enda McGlynn, Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Mr Paul Sheehan, Ms Annabella Stover, Dr Sheelagh Wickham

**Apologies:** Dr Anne Morrissey, Mr Ronan Tobin, Mr Ray Walshe

#### **SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES**

##### **1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of three additional submissions under Item 5.1 and three submissions under Item 7.

##### **2. Minutes of the meeting of 17 January 2013**

The minutes were confirmed and were signed by the Chair.

##### **3. Matters arising from the minutes**

- 3.1** With respect to the timeframe for retention of records in respect of students admitted on the basis of Recognition of Prior Learning, it was agreed that these students should be categorised on the same basis as other groups of direct applicants such that their records would be retained for the duration of their studies plus one year. (Item 3.4)

- 3.2** It was noted that the group which had convened to discuss external examiner issues had become *de facto* a working group and had met twice to date, with a third meeting planned for the last week in March 2013. As part of its work, the group is considering the development of specific regulations for examiners of school placements. (Items 3.8 and 5)
- 3.3** It was noted that the policy on assessment was under development. (Item 3.9)
- 3.4** It was noted that the working group on legacy re-admission requests had met twice to date and that a third meeting would take place on 19 March 2013. The group aims to submit its recommendations to the meeting of the USC of 4 April 2013. (Items 3.13 and 6.4.1)
- 3.5** 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 3.14)
- 3.6** A draft revised policy on academic integrity and plagiarism was noted. In the ensuing discussion, the following were noted:
- it is important to foreground to students the importance of the concept of academic integrity and to provide appropriate instruction with respect to plagiarism
  - there may be scope for rewording the declaration made electronically by students, upon registration, to include a reference to the fact that they undertake to uphold academic integrity
  - the revised policy is likely to be very useful to postgraduate students including research students; relevant information is already made available to them at orientation
  - account needs to be taken of the difficulties that can arise where plagiarism is suspected but the burden of work required to check the situation is likely to be onerous
  - as an associated issue, the concepts of poor academic practice and plagiarism need to be clearly distinguished, particularly as students' progress through their studies and are expected to develop a mature understanding of plagiarism
  - it will be important to ensure University-wide familiarity with, and ownership of, the policy, once approved, to facilitate consistency of approach
  - there may be scope for more extensive use of Moodle facilities to enable students to take responsibility for avoiding plagiarism
  - the location of the formal records requires further clarification
  - the situation in which a case of plagiarism is referred directly to the Disciplinary Committee needs to be captured in the flowchart

- the draft revised policy needs to be reworded in several places to ensure additional clarity and rigour
- it will be helpful to take account once more of current practices within Faculties.

It was agreed that the issues above would be discussed with Faculties and that changes, as agreed, would be made to the revised draft policy, with a view to its being considered again at the USC meeting of 4 April 2013. The Chair thanked Dr Wickham and the other members of the working group which had been formed to revise the policy. (Item 3.15)

**3.7** 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 as soon as possible. (Item 3.27)

**3.8** It was noted that a reworded proposal in respect of the precision mark would be considered by the USC at its meeting of 30 May 2013, along with other issues relating to Marks and Standards. (Item 7.1)

**3.9** It was noted that a set of guidelines in respect of examinations held in remote locations would be submitted to the USC for its consideration as soon as possible. (Item 8)

**3.10** The following were noted as being under consideration. Updated information on them will be provided to the USC as and when possible and appropriate.

- Discussions are in progress with respect to admission and entry to programmes in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing for candidates whose native language is not English. Information on the progression rate of students on the pre-Master's Foundation Programme has informed these
- Discussions are 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 3.2)
- With respect to the policy on Recognition of Prior Learning for admission to taught programmes, the Chair and Dr Wickham are in discussion with a view to ensuring its appropriate use in Faculties. (Item 3.3)
- At a future meeting, the USC will 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 3.5)

- The possibility of providing central support for in-module examinations, given appropriate resources, is being kept under review. (Item 3.6)
- Issues relating to external examining are being discussed in the context of the restructuring of the postgraduate framework in Psychotherapy in the School of Nursing and Human Sciences. (Item 3.7)
- Further discussion about the placing of historical qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications, with particular reference to the linked colleges, will take place in due course. (Item 3.11)
- Some stand-alone modules remain outside the Faculty structure, and this needs to be addressed so as to ensure that all modules are associated with a Faculty. (Item 5)
- Issues with respect to student workload in the later years of some programmes, the structures of which had altered to meet Teaching Council requirements, will be kept under review. (Item 7.2)

#### **4. Minutes of the Graduate Studies Board meeting of 29 November 2012**

Approved. The following were noted:

- the policy on Recognition of Prior Learning in respect of research programmes was approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 13 February 2013
- guidelines on PhD by publication have been developed for the guidance of, *inter alia*, external examiners, in respect of whom it is important that a clear message be sent to indicate that, where previously published papers are submitted for examination, this does not indicate that a PhD by publication must necessarily pass in all instances; the guidance has been made available with respect to all stakeholders in cases where students are submitting a PhD by publication in this current academic year; a slightly revised document (taking into account some associated changes that are proposed to *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*) will be made available from 2013/14
- the call for the Daniel O'Hare Scholarships 2013 has been made.

### **SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES**

#### **5.1 Appointment of external examiners**

##### **5.1.1 Professor Davide Bigoni, University of Trento**

BEng/MEng in Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering

Decision deferred pending additional information in respect of experience and of dates of nomination, and clarification as to whether or not it is envisaged that the nominee will share responsibility for some modules with Professor Santos Peñas (see Item 5.1.2 below).

- 5.1.2 Professor Matilde Santos Peñas, Universidad Complutense de Madrid  
BEng in Mechatronic Engineering  
Decision deferred pending additional information in respect of experience and of dates of nomination, and clarification as to whether or not it is envisaged that the nominee will share responsibility for some modules with Professor Bigoni (see Item 5.1.1 above).
- 5.1.3 Dr Charles Mahony, University of Ulster  
Certificate in Plasma and Vacuum Studies  
Approved.
- 5.1.4 Dr Mark Bowden, The Open University  
MSc in Plasma and Vacuum Technology  
Approved. Agreed to request clarification about an issue relating to dates indicated on the form.
- 5.1.5 Dr Peter Williams, University of Limerick  
BSc/BEng in Manufacturing Engineering with Business Studies  
Approved.
- 5.1.6 Dr Mark Murphy, University of Glasgow  
MA in Human Development, St Patrick's College  
Approved.

It was noted that it was a matter of concern that some nominations were being made only after the nominee had commenced work, thereby vitiating the USC's decision-making remit. It was agreed that the relevant Schools would be contacted about this.

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

- 5.2.1 Dr Anne B Ryan, National University of Ireland, Maynooth  
Uaneen Modules, UM404 and UM405  
Approved.

## **6. Other issues**

None.

**SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)****7. Marks and Standards issues**

- 7.1** With respect to an issue relating to Tables 3 and 4 in Marks and Standards and, specifically, the NFQ levels that should be associated, in these tables, with the awards of Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma, it was agreed that discussion should take place at the USC meeting of 30 May 2013 in tandem with discussion of Marks and Standards issues more generally.
- 7.2** With respect to the issue of how to calculate the precision mark in the case of students exiting a programme with more credits passed than are required for the calculation of the award, it was agreed that, where certain modules are deemed core to the programme and therefore the marks obtained in them must count towards the calculation of the award, this fact should be mentioned in programme regulations and the relevant modules listed. Where it is necessary to count other modules besides these core modules (if such core modules exist), the modules for which the student has obtained the best marks may be selected. The relevant module mark will, in all cases, be the mark obtained at the first attempt. It was agreed that the Chair would communicate with the Faculties about this matter and also that the USC would be requested to approve the wording of a Frequently Asked Question in this regard within a short timeframe. It was noted that it would be important to act quickly in terms of ensuring understanding across the University of the decision of the USC, as the Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees at which academic structures for 2013/14 would be agreed would take place soon.
- 7.3** It was noted that, to the extent possible, resit opportunities should be provided for students, particularly in view of the fact that (as noted in Section 7.1 of Marks and Standards) the resit assessment does not have to be identical to the original assessment. It was agreed that the Chair would communicate with Faculties to this effect. It was agreed that, on a pilot basis, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences would include its resit categories in the programme regulations for 2013/14 (which are to be submitted to the USC for approval, in line with normal practice) and that Ms Nic Giolla Mhichíl would report to the USC on the effectiveness of this. It was noted that it would be useful to have an overview of the failure rates (per year) in modules on the basis of resit category. It was noted too that there might be scope to reword the online instructions given to students along with their online examination results to make it clear what steps they must take in the event that a resit is necessary.

**8. Updated terms of reference for the USC**

**8.1** Approved subject to minor changes to wording to ensure that current terminology is used in all cases. Agreed that the slightly revised version would be circulated electronically to the USC.

**8.2** With respect to the names of committees more broadly, it was noted that the term 'Graduate Studies Board' does not necessarily capture the fact that the GSB's remit covers research students as distinct from students on taught postgraduate programmes. The Chair of the GSB, Dr Lisa Looney, is to give consideration to this matter.

**9. Any other business**

None.

**Date of next meeting:**

**4 April 2013  
9.00 a.m. in A204**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

Date: \_\_\_\_\_