

**UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

Thursday 2 April 2009

9.30 -11.40 a.m. in A204

**Present:** Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Mr Jonathan Begg,  
Dr Françoise Blin, Ms Olivia Bree, Dr Pat Brereton,  
Ms Jennifer Bruton, Professor Saleem Hashmi,  
Professor Martin Henry, Ms Susan Hurley, Ms Louise McDermott  
(Secretary), Professor Gary Murphy, Mr Paul Sheehan,  
Dr Anne Sinnott, Ms Annabella Stover, Dr Ann Wickham,  
Ms Sheelagh Wickham

**Apologies:** Professor Eugene Kennedy, Ms Phylomena McMorrow,  
Ms Morag Munro, Mr Ronan Tobin

**In attendance:** Ms Gillian Barry, Ms Jean Hughes

**SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES**

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of three submissions under Item 4.1 and the consequent renaming of the existing Item 4.1 as Item 4.2, and to the inclusion of an additional matter for discussion in the context of Item 12.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of 5 February 2009**

Confirmed and signed by the Chair.

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

- 3.1** Noted that procedures relating to the interface between the USC and the Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees had been agreed but that it would be desirable to convene a meeting of relevant staff members later in the academic year to review their fitness for purpose and agree procedures for the academic year 2009/10. In agreeing these procedures, account will be taken of any relevant ongoing developments which may take place in relation to the remits of the USC and other committees. (Item 3.1)
- 3.2** Noted that SIF funding for a management information system will not be available. (Item 3.2)
- 3.3** Noted that the IUA Registrars' meeting scheduled for 30 March 2009 had not in fact taken place and that the next meeting would be in June 2009. The Chair is to submit proposals to this meeting in relation to NFQ Level 9 issues and credit transfer from other institutions. (Item 3.3)
- 3.4** Noted that the Education Committee had, at its meeting of 1 April 2009, agreed that consideration should be given to the inclusion on parchments of details of specialisms taken within awards as well as details of the grade awarded, and that consultation would take place with the Registry as to the feasibility of including these. (Item 3.5)
- 3.5** Noted that two suppliers had, by the agreed deadline of 30 March 2009, tendered for the provision of the software package for aligning programme outcomes and module outcomes and that the selection of one of them was being undertaken in consultation with the Finance Office. (Item 3.6)
- 3.6** Noted that a revised wording had been drawn up by Ms Wickham in consultation with Professor Murphy for the derogation requested by the Faculty of Science and Health in respect of the precision mark in cases where module marks were raised. The proposed derogation now reads as follows:  
Existing practice in the School of Chemical Sciences in relation to precision is maintained whereby the precision mark presented for classes at the PAB is retained in final-year examinations notwithstanding any such amendments by examiners in relation to individual students. It is felt to do otherwise is unfair to students who obtain the precision without any failed components (or indeed could give a higher precision mark than students with no failed components) and would give a misleading 'ranking order'.  
This proposed derogation was approved for 2008/09. (Item 5.2)

- 3.7** Noted that it had been agreed by the Faculty of Science and Health Teaching and Learning Committee that, in 2009, students in the final years of undergraduate programmes offered by the School of Chemical Sciences would have an opportunity to repeat in August modules failed in Semester 1 and/or Semester 2. (Item 5.2)
- 3.8** Noted that a derogation from *Marks and Standards* which applies in 2008/09 to the BSc in Applied Physics, the BSc in Applied Physics with Astronomy and the BSc in Biomedical Diagnostics had been communicated to students. (Item 5.2)
- 3.9** Noted that two changes to the wording of derogations from *Marks and Standards* for programmes in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing had, as requested by the USC, been made and that the revised version of the derogations had been communicated to the Registry. (Item 5.3)
- 3.10** Noted that procedures in relation to issues in *Marks and Standards* had been outlined to the meeting of Academic Council of 11 February 2009, that the implementation of the procedures was being co-ordinated by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and that the outcome of the exercise would be submitted to the meeting of Academic Council of 8 April 2009. (Item 8.1)
- 3.11** Noted that a letter had been drafted within the Faculty of Engineering and Computing for the President to send to an external examiner and that, at the President's request, a covering letter would shortly also be drafted. (Item 8.1)
- 3.12** Because information on a proposed stand-alone module from the Faculty of Science and Health is awaited, further discussion of the proposal was deferred. (Item 9)
- 3.13** Noted that the Education Committee had, at its meeting of 1 April 2009, agreed that a detailed proposal would be drawn up on approval mechanisms for stand-alone modules and a range of other innovations which involve additions and/or changes to module provision but fall short of requiring accreditation as would a proposal for a new programme. This proposal is to be submitted to the 4 June 2009 meeting of the USC with a view to availing of the extensive expertise USC members have in relation to such matters. Agreed that, since the number of stand-alone modules in the Faculty of Science and Health is relatively high, Ms Wickham would submit to Ms McDermott suggestions which could be used in the drawing up of the proposal. (Item 9)
- 3.14** Noted that advice from the Secretary's Office had indicated that the proposed abolition of the threshold for progression from a Graduate Diploma to a Master's programme would have potential implications for those who had graduated with the Graduate Diploma with a mark lower than the threshold and therefore not been

in a position to progress to the Master's programme. Agreed that letters would be sent to the previous five cohorts of graduates in this position to invite them to proceed to the Master's programme should they wish to do so. Noted that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education could consider raising with their Faculties the possibility of taking this approach to all relevant programmes. Agreed that the fees implications for students taking up such an invitation would need to be dealt with by relevant offices within the university and that it would not be appropriate for the USC to become involved in the issue. Noted that the implementation of the NFQ, including the conceptualisation of a (Level 9) Graduate Diploma as a minor award in relation to a (Level 9) Master's programme, precluded the future use of thresholds for progression from Graduate Diploma to Master's. (Item 10.2)

- 3.15** Noted that the Access programme to the Graduate Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapeutic Practice had been advertised on the basis of the current entry requirements (updated in terms of wording to ensure compatibility with NFQ terminology) rather than proposed new entry requirements which had been discussed by the USC both at its meeting of 5 February 2009 and subsequently on an electronic basis. The reason for this is that the request to change the entry requirements had given rise to a wide-ranging discussion of issues related to Accreditation of Prior Learning and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, and the Chair had therefore advised that it would be preferable not to make a decision to change requirements in relation to a single programme. Agreed that the Chair and Ms Hughes would draft updated proposals on APL and APEL for the 4 June 2009 meeting of the USC, taking as a starting-point recommendations previously approved by Academic Council on 19 February 2003 and also taking account of practice elsewhere. (Item 10.3)
- 3.16** Noted that the proposed new procedures and form in relation to external examiners' reports were being piloted in all Faculties (and not simply in two as had been agreed by the USC at its meeting of 5 February 2009) and that a report on their fitness for purpose would be made to the 1 October 2009 meeting of the USC. (Item 12)

## **SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES**

### **4. Derogations from *Marks and Standards***

#### **4.1 Faculty of Science and Health**

- 4.1.1 Noted that a proposal to adopt a particular course of action in the School of Health and Human Performance, described as a proposed derogation from *Marks and Standards*, is not in fact a derogation but rather forms part of the decision-making responsibilities of the Progression and Awards Boards.
- 4.1.2 A proposed derogation applying to all programmes offered in the School of Health and Human Performance was approved for 2008/09.
- 4.1.3 A proposed derogation applying to the BSc in Athletic Therapy and Training was approved for 2008/09 subject to clarification in relation to the timing of repeat examination opportunities for students.

#### **4.2 Faculty of Engineering and Computing**

- 4.2.1 MSc in Bioinformatics: the proposed derogation was not approved. Agreed that the Programme Board would be requested to reconsider the general issues involved, in consultation with relevant other parties if necessary and taking account of the importance of avoiding undue severity in terms of proposals relating to student achievement. Agreed also that the Programme Board would be requested to support a particular student in making an informed choice as to whether or not to avail of remaining opportunities to access the Practicum module.
- 4.2.2 Proposal to allow taught Master's programmes to include ITS stage 4 modules: approval of the proposal was deferred on the basis that the issues it raises are of considerable significance university wide in terms of NFQ compatibility and that therefore a decision should not be made in respect of a small number of programmes pending the development of an overarching policy. Agreed that Ms Munro and Ms Hughes, in consultation with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education, Professor Murphy and other stakeholders as appropriate, would prepare proposals on the issues for submission to the 4 June 2009 meeting of the USC. The proposals will need to encompass matters such as the balance to be struck between maximising teaching resources and maintaining the integrity of Master's programmes, and approaches to assessment where class groups include students taking modules at different levels.

### **5. Changes to examination regulations**

No items.

**6. Nominations/renewals/changes to duties of external examiners for taught programmes**

**6.1 Appointment of external examiners**

**6.1.1 Dublin City University Business School**

No items.

**6.1.2 Faculty of Engineering and Computing**

No items.

**6.1.3 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

No items.

**6.1.4 Faculty of Science and Health**

No items.

**6.1.5 Oscail**

No items.

**6.1.6 Linked Colleges**

6.1.6.1 Dr Peter McGrail, Liverpool John Moores University  
Bachelor of Arts, BA in Pastoral Theology, MA in Leadership and Pastoral Care,  
All Hallows College  
Approved.

6.1.6.2 Ms Claire Connolly, St Mary's University College, Belfast  
Teaching practice modules on the Bachelor of Education and Graduate Diploma  
in Education (Primary Teaching), St Patrick's College  
Approved.

6.1.6.3 Mr Breandán Ó Bric, DES Inspector, Primary Section (retired)  
Teaching practice modules on the Bachelor of Education and Graduate Diploma in  
Education (Primary Teaching), St Patrick's College  
Approved.

6.1.6.4 Ms Eileen O'Sullivan, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick  
Teaching practice modules on the Bachelor of Education and Graduate Diploma  
in Education (Primary Teaching), St Patrick's College  
Approved.

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

**6.2.1 Dublin City University Business School**

No items.

**6.2.2 Faculty of Engineering and Computing**

No items.

**6.2.3 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

- 6.2.3.1 Dr John Gray, University of East London  
Modules in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies  
Approved.

**6.2.4 Faculty of Science and Health**

No items.

**6.2.5 Oscail**

No items.

**6.2.6 Linked Colleges**

No items.

**7. Regulatory issues as highlighted in external examiners' reports**

No items.

**8. Stand-alone modules**

No items.

**9. Other issues (from Faculties)**

No items.

**SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)****10. Request for registration on two programmes**

The request to allow a student to register concurrently for a taught Master's programme and a research Master's programme was approved subject to confirmation that the student would be facilitated in understanding all the implications of the approval. Noted that the student would, at the appropriate time, be eligible to request transfer to the PhD register by means of the standard procedure. Agreed that the principle that registration should normally be for one programme at one time should be maintained but that consideration should be given to approving concurrent registrations in exceptional cases such as the present one. Agreed that, in all instances, measures should be taken (as has happened in the present case) to ensure that the student could not obtain credit on two different programmes for the same piece of work. Agreed that any future requests for concurrent registrations on a taught programme and a research programme should be submitted to the Graduate Studies Board for consideration.

**11. Initial draft proposals on credit transfer from other institutions**

Agreed that the proposals would benefit from some rewording, as follows: it should be ensured that the references to minimum credits to be obtained in DCU are expressed in the context of learning outcomes (appropriate outcomes already achieved elsewhere and additional outcomes to be achieved in DCU); the reference to memoranda of understanding should specify that such memoranda are duly constituted and processed; additional information about the minimum credits to be taken for eligibility for consideration for a special-purpose award needs to be included. Agreed that Professor Henry would redraft the proposals (following consultation as appropriate, including consultation with Ms Hughes and Ms Wickham about the special-purpose award issue) and that it would be circulated to the USC in mid April 2009 with a request for comments. Noted that consideration might need to be given to the possibility of differentiating between Levels 8 and 9 in terms of minimum credits to be taken at DCU and to the continued desirability, especially in the light of possible future DRHEA proposals, of making two awards where a programme is undertaken at both DCU and a partner institution.



**12. Proposal on credit rating for taught Master's programmes in DCU Business School**

**12.1** Discussion of this item was deferred on the basis that it would be more fruitful to conduct it in the context of the forthcoming proposals referred to in Item 4.2.2 above. Noted that further consideration of the issue would benefit from knowledge of practice elsewhere. Noted that a new ECTS Users' Guide had been published and would be circulated to the USC members. The Chair noted that, while timely implementation of the NFQ is very important, it should be carried out in a way that provides opportunities for the university to examine the experience of implementation in other countries and utilise the lessons gleaned from this when carrying out its own implementation activities.

**12.2** A request from a Programme Board to change its entry requirements to accommodate students with two different types of qualification, have them follow the same programme with the same learning outcomes and make two separate awards was noted as being potentially problematic. It was agreed that the possibility of making the same award to all students, and allowing differentiation to take place on a separate basis by means of professional recognition by an external awarding body, would be considered. Dr Sinnott undertook to explore this possibility further and communicate with the Chair about it.

**13. Final draft policy on plagiarism**

The following were agreed: the proposal needs to contain references to the fact that students should be actively encouraged not to plagiarise and to make full use of resources such as the Library's referencing guide (it was noted, in this context, that a wide variety of referencing norms is in use in the university); a stipulation also needs to be incorporated to the effect that students must be informed that the award of zero, or another failing mark, in a module as a penalty for plagiarism might result in the capping of an award at a grade lower than that which would otherwise have been obtained; where a specific local penalty exists, it should be outlined in detail in documentation; notwithstanding this, it should be ensured that local penalties are consistent throughout the university; discussions are to take place between appropriate staff members in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing and Oscail with a view to ensuring the operability of procedures in relation to plagiarism where modules are taken, and marked, on line; the final policy on plagiarism is to be submitted to the 4 June 2009 meeting of the USC with a request for approval.

**14. Proposed *Marks and Standards* for the Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary Teaching), St Patrick's College**

Approved.

**15. Any other business**

The Chair noted that, because a number of significant issues are to be submitted for consideration at the 4 June 2009 meeting of the USC, it would be desirable to maximise the use of time at that meeting by creating a section in the agenda to accommodate items which could be formally noted and/or approved without the need for discussion.

**Date of next meeting:**

**4 June 2009  
9.30 a.m. in A204**

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

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