UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 5 February 2009

9.30 a.m.-12.00 midday 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 Louise McDermott (Secretary), Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Ms Morag Munro, Professor Gary Murphy, Mr Paul Sheehan, Dr Anne Sinnott, Ms Annabella Stover, Mr Ronan Tobin, Dr Ann Wickham, Ms Sheelagh Wickham
Apologies:	Ms Susan Hurley, Professor Eugene Kennedy

The Chair, in welcoming Mr Ronan Tobin, Dean of Studies and Acting Registrar of All Hallows College, to his first meeting of the University Standards Committee, noted that this meeting was the first at which she herself acted as Chair.

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1.   Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of two submissions under Item 7.2, one submission under Item 8.1 and a new submission at Item 10.2 (with the consequent renumbering of existing Item 10.2 as 10.3 and Item 10.3 as 10.4).

2.   Minutes of the meeting of 2 October 2008

Confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3.   Matters arising from the minutes

3.1   <u>Noted</u> that it had emerged since the meeting of 4 December 2008 that a small
          number of procedures relating to the interface between the USC and the Faculty
          Teaching and Learning/Education Committees still needed to be agreed, and that
          this would be done shortly. (Item 3.4)

3.2   <u>Noted</u> that the SIF funding which had been requested for a management
          information system would now not be available owing to the reduction in SIF
          funding generally and that Ms Jean Hughes, Director of SIF Programmes, had
          requested the HEA for guidance as to whether any other means of funding a MIS
          might be made available. (Item 3.7)

3.3   The issues relating to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications, and the
          need to develop an institutional policy on them, were <u>noted</u>. In this connection, a
          request from DCU Business School was <u>noted</u> which involved the possibility of
          attributing a credit rating of 60 to the MSc in International Management, which is
          offered in partnership with the IPBS (International Partnership of Business Schools)
          and attracts international students who already hold 240-credit Level 8 degrees and
          wish to take only 60 additional credits. <u>Noted</u> that this request raised a number of
          issues, particularly with respect to equity of treatment for students; <u>agreed,</u>
          therefore, that Dr Sinnott and Ms Bruton would prepare a proposal on the issues for
          discussion at the 2 April 2009 meeting of the USC. <u>Agreed</u> also that the Chair
          would discuss the issues further with Professor Maria Slowey, who had highlighted
          the importance of equity of treatment, and that she would also establish how soon it
          would be possible to raise the general issues relating to Level 9 with the IUA
          Registrars' Group. (Item 3.8)

3.4   <u>Noted</u> that the USC had approved electronically a proposal from the Graduate
          Studies Board for the submission of a PhD thesis in a non-standard format.
          Professor Henry thanked the members of the USC for considering and making a
          recommendation on the issue. (Item 4)

3.5   <u>Noted</u> that issues need to be discussed relating to the consistency across the
          university in terms of the extent, if any, to which specialisms/majors/pathways are
          specified on parchments, and that there is also a range of decisions to be made
          relating to the parameters within which designatory letters for programmes may be
          selected.   <u>Agreed</u> to refer these matters to the Education Committee so that they
          might be addressed, within the context of validation, at a future meeting.
          (Item 10.1)

3.6   <u>Noted</u> that a software package for aligning programme outcomes and module
          outcomes had been identified, that a submission for funding for it had been made to

Budget Committee and that, at the request of Budget Committee, a group with membership drawn from ISS, Registry, Faculty administration and the AFI Steering Group was discussing detailed costings. (Item 11.1)

3.7   Noted that, at its meeting of 10 December 2008, Academic Council had approved two documents relating to the Academic Framework for Innovation: an overview of developments to date and an interim proposal on *Marks and Standards*. (Item 11.2)

3.8   Noted that, since the meeting of the USC of 4 December 2008, three items had been approved electronically: the proposal for the submission of a PhD thesis in a non-standard format referred to at 3.4 above; a change to the originally-approved dates of appointment of an external examiner; a request to readmit to an undergraduate programme a student who had been absent for longer than the maximum period of time stipulated in *Marks and Standards*.

4.   Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 8 January 2009

Approved subject to the inclusion of the word 'approved' in Item 6.7. Noted, in relation to Item 3.8, that Professor Murphy would keep the Chair apprised of developments. In relation to Item 10, Professor Murphy summarised briefly the remit and current priorities of the IUA Fourth Level Network, noting in particular the relevance of its work on developing structured PhD programmes to the recent call for funding under PRTLI Cycle 5 and the ongoing discussions on mutual recognition of training modules across higher education institutions.

SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES

5.   Derogations from *Marks and Standards*

5.1   Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Approved.

5.2   Faculty of Science and Health

The proposed derogation 1 was approved for the academic year 2008/09.

The proposed derogation 2 was approved for the academic year 2008/09 subject to rewording designed to ensure that the intention to treat all students equitably is stated more clearly. Agreed that Ms Wickham would discuss the rewording with

Professor Murphy, who had commented on the issue. <u>Agreed</u> that the USC would be requested to consider the reworded derogation electronically.

<u>Noted</u>, with regard to the proposed derogation 3a, that it involved consideration of procedural matters rather than a proposed departure from a regulation in *Marks and Standards*. The proposal was <u>approved</u> for the academic year 2008/09.

<u>Agreed</u> to defer a decision on the proposed derogation 3b pending further information about the rationale for requiring undergraduate students on Science programmes who fail a final-year module to repeat it in the following academic year rather than the current academic year. Some general concern was expressed about the possibility that the penalties for students on undergraduate Science programmes failing a final-year module might be overly severe.

The proposed derogation 3c was <u>approved</u>, for the academic year 2008/09, subject to confirmation that what is proposed has already been communicated to students (on the basis that it is custom and practice already).

The proposed derogation 4 was <u>approved</u>.

<u>Noted</u> that, owing to the variations in practice across the university in terms of a number of derogations from *Marks and Standards* including capping module marks following failure and repeat, a wide range of demands was being made of the ITS system.

5.3   Faculty of Engineering and Computing

All the proposed derogations were <u>approved</u> for the academic year 2008/09, subject to the addition of 'subject to a minimum of 40%' at the end of the second sentence under 'All Mechanical and Manufacturing Undergraduate Programmes' and the replacement of the reference to 'honours' by a reference to 'credit/distinction' under 'Graduate Diploma in Information Technology'.

6.   Changes to examination regulations

No items.

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

7.1   Appointment of external examiners

7.1.1   Dublin City University Business School

No items.

7.1.2   Faculty of Engineering and Computing

No items.

7.1.3   Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

No items.

7.1.4   Faculty of Science and Health

No items.

7.1.5   Oscail

No items.

7.1.6   Linked Colleges

7.1.6.1   Dr Janice Wearmouth, Liverpool Hope University
          Special/inclusive education modules on the Certificate and Diploma in Education,
          St Patrick's College
          Approved.
7.1.6.2   Dr Fearghal McGarry, Queen's University, Belfast
          Bachelor of Religious Education, Mater Dei Institute of Education
          Approved.

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

7.2.1   Dublin City University Business School

7.2.1.1   Professor Louis Brennan, Trinity College Dublin
          MSc in Operations and Technology Management
          Approved.

7.2.2   Faculty of Engineering and Computing

7.2.2.1   Professor Paul Rees, University of Swansea
Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/MEng in Electronic Systems
Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma/MEng in Telecommunications
Engineering
Approved.

7.2.3   Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

7.2.3.1 Dr Rita Abrahamsen, University of Wales, Aberystwyth
MA in International Relations, MA in Globalisation
Approved.

7.2.4   Faculty of Science and Health

No items.

7.2.5   Oscail

7.2.5.1   Mr Terry Twomey, Limerick Institute of Technology
MSc in Information Systems for Managers
Approved.

7.2.6   Linked Colleges

7.2.6.1   Dr Raphael Gallagher, Accademia Alfonsiana, Rome
Graduate Diploma/MA in School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care,
Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.
7.2.6.2   Dr Fiachra Long, University College Cork
Graduate Diploma/MA in School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care,
Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.

8.   Regulatory issues as highlighted in external examiners' reports

**8.1   Faculty of Engineering and Computing: issue at Progression and Awards
Board, BEng in Electronic Engineering**

The issue highlighted in the report was noted. Agreed that the USC could not
provide clarification on it since *Marks and Standards* (including derogations)

themselves required thoroughgoing revision and various specific issues, including this one, were not easily amenable to resolution in the absence of this revision. Very serious concern was expressed at the extent of the inconsistencies apparent in *Marks and Standards* (including derogations), and it was <u>agreed</u> that a proposal designed to clarify some of the issues for 2008/09 would be put Academic Council at its meeting of 11 February 2009.

The Chair <u>noted</u> that the ongoing work of the AFI Steering Group in revising *Marks and Standards* was very necessary and timely.

Faculty of Engineering and Computing: concern expressed by external examiner at non-availability of students for interview prior to Progression and Awards Boards

The concern expressed by the examiner was <u>noted</u>, and it was <u>agreed</u> that Ms Bruton would draft a letter, on behalf of the Faculty, outlining the measures which had been taken to address the matter and would request the President to send it to the examiner.

9.   **Stand-alone modules**

School of Nursing: Personal Growth and Community-building through Leadership

Decision deferred pending receipt of information about the following:
- the NQF level that is meant by the reference to 'certificate level education' as an entry requirement (it is <u>noted</u> that entry requirements should conform to those necessary for entry to Level 8 awards generally)
- the extent to which it can be guaranteed that the syllabus can be delivered in a coherent manner and that the learning outcomes are appropriate to a Level 8 award
- the relationship between the module title and the reading list; the latter does not appear to contain material on leadership, and is dated in parts
- the extent to which both those due to deliver the module and members of the proposed partner organisation are in a position to support the module in the manner proposed.

The Chair <u>noted</u> that, since the Education Committee (including the Validation Subgroup) had specific expertise in evaluating programme proposals, it might be preferable for proposed stand-alone modules to be submitted for approval to the EC rather than the USC, and that the EC would shortly make a recommendation on this

issue. She noted also that the Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees have a number of significant responsibilities in terms of approving stand-alone modules, including the following:

- establishing the appropriateness of the content and learning outcomes to the proposed NFQ level
- ensuring that the proposed staffing arrangements are such as to enable the module to be delivered to the requisite standard.

The importance of maintaining a clear distinction between programmes and awards was noted.

10.   Other issues (from Faculties)

10.1.   Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences:

Graduate Diploma/MSc in Guidance and Counselling: proposal for amendment to student registration and progression

Approved. The issues relating to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications were again noted as being problematic and requiring resolution as soon as possible (see Item 3.3 above).

10.2   DCU Business School

Graduate Diploma/MSc in Emergency Management and Graduate Diploma/MBS in Safety and Health at Work: proposal to allow progression from the Graduate Diploma to the Master's programme without the need to achieve a threshold mark

Approved in the case of the Graduate Diploma/MSc in Emergency Management, on the basis that there was no possibility that students would be adversely affected. In the case of the Graduate Diploma/MBS in Safety and Health at Work, the proposal was supported in principle but a decision on it was deferred pending advice from the Secretary's Office on the extent to which approval might entail adverse consequences for students who had graduated with the Graduate Diploma not having qualified for admission to the Master's.

10.3   Faculty of Science and Health

Graduate Diploma in Counselling and Psychotherapeutic Practice/Master's and Doctorate in Psychotherapy: request for changes to entry requirements

Decision deferred on all requests pending receipt of additional information, as follows:

Access Programme: it will be necessary to establish what level(s) on the National Framework of Qualifications are envisaged by the reference to 'a relevant certificate or diploma'. Once this information becomes available, it will be circulated electronically to the USC so that the request can be considered again.

Master's and Doctoral programmes: it is <u>noted</u> that the entry criteria incorporate the possibility that an applicant holding a Level 8 degree (for the Master's) or a Level 9 degree (for the Doctorate) from another institution might be admitted and obtain a DCU degree. <u>Agreed</u> that consideration should be given to approval on these bases, but that approval could not be granted at this time in the absence of a general university policy on credit transfer from other institutions (i.e. the minimum number of credits that must be taken in DCU for an award to be deemed a DCU award). <u>Agreed</u> that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and the Academic Director of the Academic Framework for Innovation would submit an initial proposal on such a policy to the 2 April 2009 meeting of the USC and that the Chair would, as soon as possible, inform them of the status of discussions on the matter within the IUA Registrars' Group.

10.4   St Patrick's College

Master's in Special Educational Needs and the Graduate Diploma in Special Education: request for changes to delivery modes

<u>Approved.</u>

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)

11.   Preliminary document on plagiarism policy

11.1 The proposed definition was <u>approved</u> subject to the deletion of the reference to 'thoughts' in the first sentence. Further consideration is also to be given to the desirability or otherwise of including the reference to 'deliberate' in the first sentence.

11.2 The proposed assignment submission form was <u>approved</u> subject to the elimination of the requirement for the student to indicate 'yes' or 'no' to each statement about the material submitted and its replacement by a requirement for the student to sign underneath the list of statements as an endorsement of all of them.

11.3 <u>Noted</u> that it is necessary for Oscail to be kept abreast of proposals in relation to plagiarism, and <u>agreed</u> that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education would send a copy of the revised preliminary document to Professor Maria Slowey and Dr Ann Wickham and involve them in the further discussions on the issue.

11.4 <u>Noted</u> that a full proposal on a plagiarism policy would be submitted to the USC meeting of 2 April 2009.

12. **Proposed procedures and form: external examiners for taught programmes**

<u>Agreed</u> that the proposed procedures and form would be piloted, for 2008/09, in DCU Business School and the Faculty of Engineering and Computing and the outcome reported to a future meeting of the USC. The pilot will be conducted on a paper basis, because further discussions with ISS and Registry are required to establish the extent of the resources required to implement a web-based system. The views of the external examiners in DCU Business School and the Faculty of Engineering and Computing about the fitness for purpose of the form will be sought. The Chair thanked the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education for their work to date on this issue.

13. **Proposal: principles and processes relating to graduate education**

<u>Approved.</u> <u>Noted</u> that students in some Schools are required to pass certain modules and that therefore the proposal to deregister students from failed modules following two attempts should not apply to them; instead, their needs will be met by the arrangements stipulated in the first paragraph under 'Assessment regulations'. <u>Noted</u> that it would be very important to obtain the agreement of staff to deliver workshop-format modules during the inter-semester break. <u>Noted</u> that the Graduate Research Office does not offer generic skills development modules itself but acts as a co-ordinating body for Schools which do.

14. **Any other business**

None.

Date of next meeting:

2 April 2009
9.30 a.m. in A204

Signed: _____   Date: _____
              Chair