UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 7 April 2011

9.00-11.45 a.m. in A204

Present:	Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Françoise Blin, Dr Dermot Brabazon, Ms Olivia Bree, Ms Jennifer Bruton, Ms Bernadette Dowling, Professor Saleem Hashmi, Mr Billy Kelly, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Dr Anne Morrissey, Ms Morag Munro, Professor Gary Murphy, Mr Paul Sheehan, Ms Annabella Stover, Dr Sheelagh Wickham
Apologies:	Mr Ronan Tobin
In attendance:	Ms Mairéad Guinan (for Item 3.10) Ms Gillian Barry (for Items 6.1.2 and 8)

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1.   Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of one additional submission under Item 6 and one additional submission under Item 10.

2.   Minutes of the meeting of 3 February 2011

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3.   Matters arising from the minutes

3.1   <u>Noted</u> that an appropriate title was being sought for the conversion programmes in teacher education offered by various higher education institutions. (Item 3.1)

3.2   <u>Noted</u> that discussions with Faculties about the placing of post-1989 (i.e. DCU) qualifications on the NFQ would be progressed in due course. (Item 3.2)

3.3 <u>Noted</u> that the fee implications of Marks and Standards, especially in respect of the regulations about repeating modules, were being kept under review. (Item 3.4)

3.4 <u>Noted</u> that sector-wide discussions about the management of the PAC application fee were in progress. (Item 3.9)

3.5 <u>Noted</u> that the revised policies on *aegrotat* awards had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 9 February 2011. (Item 3.10)

3.6 <u>Noted</u> that the working group on non-major awards was continuing its deliberations with a view to bringing proposals on approval processes to the Education Committee and proposals intended to ensure full alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications to the University Standards Committee.
(Items 3.11 and 7.1)

3.7 <u>Noted</u> that a Programme Board was giving consideration to alternative marking mechanisms for 2011/12 and beyond. (Item 3.12)

3.8 <u>Noted</u> that further comment from an external examiner about a matter relating to the University's plagiarism policy was awaited. <u>Noted</u>, with respect to the decisions of the Disciplinary Committee, that it would be helpful for information to be made available to staff about the reasons that led to them, and <u>agreed</u> that the Chair would raise this matter with the University Secretary. <u>Noted</u> that the presentations on the examination appeals and disciplinary procedures that had taken place in late January 2011 had been found very helpful. It may be desirable to organise such sessions again in the new academic year. (Item 3.13)

3.9 <u>Noted</u> that the modifications to the ITS Calculate programme to ensure its compatibility with Marks and Standards (as revised in 2010/11) were nearing completion and that testing would begin later in April 2011. <u>Noted</u> that additional system enhancements were also under way, though these might not be complete within the same timescale. (Item 3.15)

3.10 <u>Noted</u>, with respect to the dissemination and recording of external examiners' recommendations and the responses to them, that the system used in the University of Limerick appeared to have several very useful features and that further discussions with UL were due to take place on 8 April 2011. The following matters were alluded to in discussion: any system used should be as user-friendly, efficient and transparent as possible; consideration will need to be given to asking the external examiner if he/she considers that a response to the recommendations is necessary; consideration will need to be given to the best method of balancing the need for appropriately wide access to examiners' comments with the need to ensure that comments in respect of specific staff members are not made available inappropriately; the emphasis in any system should be on supportive enhancement..

Noted that, in UL, responsibility for this area falls within the remit of the Director of Quality. The Chair requested that any further queries on the UL system be submitted to Ms Mairéad Guinan of the Registry by the end of the day. (Item 3.18)

3.11 A proposal to modify Section 2.3.1 of *Regulations and guidelines: external examiners for taught programmes and modules* (approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 9 February 2011), so as to include a reference to membership of a quality peer review group, was approved. (Item 3.19)

3.12 Noted that amendments had been made to the University Code of Discipline to include reference to contract cheating and the fact that it is not permitted. Agreed to request the Secretary's Office to make the following two changes to the wording of the amendments: the words 'dissertations and research work' at the end of the second bullet point to be replaced by 'dissertations, theses and research work'; the words 'or websites' at the end of the fourth bullet point to be replaced by 'that facilitate contract cheating'. (Item 6.1.1)

3.13 Noted that a number of revised programme-specific regulations for 2010/11, having been approved, had been made available on line. (Items 6.1.2, 6.2.2 and 6.3.1)

3.14 Noted that a template for use for requests for the readmission of 'legacy' students had been drafted and submitted to relevant staff members, that detailed feedback had been made available, and that a revised draft was now under consideration by the staff members. (Item 6.2.1)

3.15 Noted that discussions were in progress with Queen's University Belfast in respect of the Marks and Standards for the jointly-awarded MSc in Plasma and Vacuum Technology. (Item 7.1)

3.16 Noted that a part-time staffing resource had been identified to administer the system for dealing with applications for admission under the Recognition of Prior Learning policy (amended in line with the recommendations of the USC at its meeting of 3 February 2011 and approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 9 February 2011) and that Ms Cooke, Dr Wickham and the Chair were due to meet shortly to agree timescales and deadlines with a view to having the system ready to use by September 2011 for admission in 2012/13. Noted that, in the event that applications of this kind increased significantly in number in the future, further consideration would be given to the type of staffing resources required.   (Item 8)

3.17 Noted that the revised draft *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*, due for consideration by Academic Council at its meeting of 13 April 2011, had been made available electronically to the members of the USC. (Item 9)

3.18 <u>Noted</u> that recommendations would be made to the 26 May 2011 meeting of the USC in respect of procedures for submitting examination papers, project titles, examination scripts and related matters to external examiners and for retaining scripts. (Item 11)

3.19 <u>Noted</u> that two requests for the readmission of 'legacy' students to the MA in International Relations (part time) had been approved electronically by the USC, on 25 February 2011 and 18 March 2011.

4.   **Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 13 January 2011**

         <u>Approved.</u>

SECTION B: **FACULTY ISSUES**

5.1   **Appointment of external examiners**

5.1.1   Professor Seán Doyle, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
         MSc in Bioprocess Engineering
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.2   Professor Alan Kelly, University College Cork
         MSc in Bioprocess Engineering
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.3   Professor Lorna McKee, University of Aberdeen
         MSc in Organisational Change and Leadership Development
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.4   Professor David Gwilliam, University of Exeter
         Undergraduate modules in Accounting, Dublin City University Business School
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.5   Dr Michael O'Donoghue, University of Manchester
         MSc in Education and Training Management (E-Learning)
         <u>Approved</u> subject to the provision of a list of the modules to be examined.
5.1.6   Professor William Buchanan, Napier University
         BEng/MEng in Digital Media Engineering
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.7   Dr Carmel O'Sullivan, Trinity College Dublin
         Master of Education, Education Department, St Patrick's College
         <u>Approved</u> for a four-year (rather than a three-year) period subject to confirmation that the nominee is in agreement with this.

5.1.8   Dr Rose Malone, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
        EdD, Education Department, St Patrick's College
        <u>Approved</u> for a four-year (rather than a three-year) period subject to confirmation
        that the nominee is in agreement with this.

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

5.2.1   Dr Lionel Pilkington, National University of Ireland, Galway
        Undergraduate modules in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural
        Studies
        <u>Approved</u> subject to clarification of the reason the module codes had been changed
        and the extent, if any, to which this was likely to impact on the examiner's work.
5.2.2   Dr Carol Atkinson, University of Bradford
        Bachelor of Business Studies
        <u>Approved.</u>
5.2.3   Dr Nicholas McDonald, Trinity College Dublin
        Postgraduate modules in Dublin City University Business School
        <u>Approved.</u>
5.2.4   Professor Noel Hyndman, Queen's University Belfast
        Postgraduate modules in Accounting, Dublin City University Business School
        <u>Approved.</u>
5.2.5   Dr David Linton, Queen's University Belfast
        BEng/MEng in Electronic Engineering; BEng/MEng in Information and
        Communications Engineering
        <u>Approved.</u>
5.2.6   Professor Robin Clarke, University of Ulster
        BEng in Mechatronic Engineering
        <u>Approved.</u>
5.2.7   Dr Colin Coulter, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
        BA in Contemporary Culture and Society
        <u>Approved.</u>
5.2.8   Professor Philip Thomas, University of Bradford
        Module NS487: Co-operative Learning Course: Service Improvement Leadership
        for Mental Health Service Users, Carers and Service Providers
        <u>Approved.</u>
5.2.9   Professor Norma Clarke, Kingston University
        Undergraduate modules in Literature, Oscail
        <u>Approved</u> subject to the provision of a list of the modules to be externed.
5.2.10 Dr Tony Leahy, Health Service Executive
        Module NS464: Mental Health in Primary Care
        <u>Approved.</u>

Noted that, in some cases, there was no reference on the EE1 (nomination) form to acting as external examiner for examinations, because the programmes involved no examinations. Agreed that it would be useful to specify on the EE1 form that no examinations are involved, where this is the case.

6.   Other issues

6.1   Faculty of Engineering and Computing

6.1.1 Request for re-admission to the MSc in Security and Forensic Computing programme 2011/12

Approved.

6.1.2 Proposal in respect of student marks on portal pages

Agreed that a change should be made to enable the displaying of decimalised values of the continuous assessment/examination elements, for the remainder of the academic year, so as to avoid confusion for students. Agreed that Ms McMorrow and Dr Wickham would draft a proposal on the displaying of the precision mark and the entering of whole values for marks, and would submit it, on behalf of the USC, for the consideration of the Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committees. Agreed that the views of the relevant members of Faculty Administration staff would also be ascertained, that the matter would be referred to at the pre-PBERC briefing meetings for Programme Chairs and that, to the extent possible, feedback on the display of the precision mark would also be sought at the Progression and Awards Boards in June 2011. The aim is to have a proposal on both matters for consideration by the USC at its first meeting of the academic year 2011/12. (See also Item 8.1 below.)

6.1.3 Appropriate NFQ level for the Open Opportunities in Engineering programme

Noted that the level in question is Level 8.

6.1.4 Proposals on awards for BEng/MEng programmes

Approved. Noted that there might, however, be implications at a future date for the 300-credit Master's programmes which had from time to time been mooted and which would be at variance, in terms of credit volume, with the BEng/MEng. Agreed that these implications would need to be monitored. Noted that discussions were in progress between the Faculty of Engineering and Computing and the Registry with respect to the mechanisms for ensuring student progression to the MEng. Agreed that ongoing consideration should be given to the fitness for

purpose of the use of the slash to make the distinction between the BEng and the MEng.

6.2   Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

6.2.1   Request for re-admission to the MA in Communication and Cultural Studies programme 2011/12

Approved. Noted that a register of requests for readmission of 'legacy' students, and the corresponding decisions, was being kept and would be reviewed later in 2011 with a view to determining the fitness for purpose for the current approval system and whether any changes were needed. Noted that consideration would need to be given by the University to the establishment of a formal system for terminating programmes. Noted that it is very difficult to map programme learning outcomes on to programmes which ran before such outcomes were articulated. Agreed that, since Oscail has a high number of terminated programmes and a concomitantly high number of requests for readmission to such programmes following protracted absence, Dr Morrissey would submit a paper to the USC containing proposals on the management of such requests; having regard to the currency of credits.

6.2.2   Request for approval of revised programme-specific regulations 2010/11 for the MSc in Guidance and Counselling (part-time) programme

Approved. Noted that the programme-specific regulations for 2011/12 were due to be approved by the USC by its last meeting of the academic year, 26 May 2011, and that the template would subsequently be discussed by the relevant staff members with a view to making any necessary changes and improvements for the purposes of regulations for 2012/13.

6.3   Oscail

6.3.1   Proposal in respect of the Leave of Absence policy

Approved. Agreed that it would be desirable to refer to 'extension to permitted registration period' rather than 'leave of absence' and that consideration would be given to this by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education.

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)

7.   Marks and Standards

7.1   Proposed amendments to Marks and Standards (Sections 7.1.6 and 7.1.11)

Approved subject to the replacement of the word 'alternate' in each instance by the word 'alternative' and the removal of the bold font from the word 'will' in the last sentence of Section 7.1.11. Agreed that those responsible for the Graduate Certificate in Actuarial Applications would be requested to give consideration to the ways in which students would be enabled to complete the programme in the event of non-availability of modules in academic sessions subsequent to the session of initial registration.

7.2   Agreed that a paper would be drafted for submission to the 13 April 2011 meeting of Academic Council to summarise the changes to Marks and Standards made in 2010/12, and that it would first be made available to the USC for comment.

8.   Request for clarification in respect of a number of examinations-related issues

8.1   Agreed that decimalised values of the continuous assessment/examination elements would be displayed, for the remainder of the academic year, so as to avoid confusion for students. Agreed to discuss this matter with Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education (see also Item 6.1.2 above).

8.2   Agreed that current practice is correct with respect to the precision/preponderance rule, now automated within ITS, in so far as it relates to pass/fail modules and that no change needs to be made. Noted that the same practice is used, again correctly, with regard to modules from which an exemption has been obtained. Noted that the implicit intention in the precision/preponderance rule suggests that it should be implemented on the basis of counting weightings rather than counting credits, and agreed that this matter would be discussed by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education. This may require an amendment to Marks and Standards for the coming academic session.

8.3   Agreed that current practice is correct with respect to the precision/preponderance rule in so far as it relates to the contribution from previous study periods. Noted that this would be automated within ITS, on a pilot basis, in 2011. Noted that it would be important for the previous contribution mark(s) to appear on broadsheets and that discussions are in progress with a view to enabling this.

8.4   <u>Agreed</u> that minor modifications would be made to the proposed revised wording for programme-specific regulations, in respect of progression, and that these would include the replacement of the reference to 'academic session' with a reference to 'study period'. <u>Agreed</u> that, to facilitate the preparation of programme-specific regulations for 2011/12, the new revised wording would be made available electronically to the USC, within a short timeframe, with a request for approval.

9.   Proposal in respect of the provision of feedback to students

<u>Agreed</u> that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education would ascertain practice in respect of this matter, both in DCU and elsewhere, and that they would then, in consultation with the Chair, draft a set of principles for submission for the consideration of the USC at its first meeting of the academic year 2011/12. <u>Agreed</u> that the aim would be to identify a set of acceptable standards rather than to impose a uniform system University wide.

10.   Any other business

10.1   Decision on the necessity, or otherwise, of an additional meeting prior to the last scheduled meeting of 2010/11 on 26 May 2011

<u>Agreed</u> that such an additional meeting would not be necessary but that, from 2011/12 onwards, the number of meetings per academic year would be six rather than five. This decision will be reflected in the University Schedule of Meetings 2011/12, which is currently being prepared.

10.2   Request for feedback on new distribution system for documentation

<u>Noted</u> that the new system of making documentation available on Google Docs appeared to be working well. <u>Agreed</u> that further feedback on this, if any, should be made available to Ms McDermott. Appreciation was expressed to Information Systems and Services and to Ms Morag Munro for their advice and support in relation to setting up the new system. <u>Noted</u> that the system would, over time, make retrieval of information from the papers of previous meetings, including matters arising from the minutes of previous meetings, easier.

Date of next meeting:

26 May 2011
9.00 a.m. in A204

Signed: _____   Date: _____
        Chair