

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 26 May 2011

9.00-11.30 a.m. in A204

- Present:** Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Françoise Blin,
Dr Dermot Brabazon, Ms Olivia Bree, Ms Jennifer Bruton,
Mr Cillian Byrne, Professor Saleem Hashmi,
Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Ms Phylomena McMorrow,
Dr Anne Morrissey, Professor Gary Murphy, Mr Paul Sheehan,
Mr Ronan Tobin, Dr Sheelagh Wickham
- Apologies:** Ms Bernadette Dowling, Mr Billy Kelly, Ms Morag Munro

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 5.1, one additional submission under Item 5.2 and two submissions under Item 14.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 7 April 2011

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 Noted 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 Noted that discussions with Faculties about the placing of post-1989 (i.e. DCU) qualifications on the NFQ would be progressed in due course, following consideration of current issues relating to the NFQ and once the merging of the

- National Qualifications Authority of Ireland with other institutions has taken place. Noted that the Chair is now a member of the NQAI Board. (Item 3.2)
- 3.3** Noted that the fee implications of Marks and Standards, especially in respect of the regulations about repeating modules, are being kept under review. Noted that there are divergent views about the desirability of having students pay a substantial fee to repeat a dissertation (as they must do currently). Agreed none the less that consideration might need to be given to developing a proposal that would result in a reduced fee for students repeating dissertations. (Item 3.3)
- 3.4** Noted that sector-wide discussions about the management of the PAC application fee would take place in due course but that other PAC-related issues are being prioritised at present. (Item 3.5)
- 3.5** Noted that the Secretary's Office would, henceforth, report annually to Academic Council on the outcomes of meetings of the Disciplinary Committee. The Chair suggested that USC might recommend to AC the use of a template to be adapted from that currently in use for reporting to Council on the outcomes of meetings of the Appeals Board. Noted that reports to Council need to be concise while also containing all the relevant information. Noted that the importance for staff of informing themselves of all relevant matters prior to taking cases to the Disciplinary Committee, the role of extenuating circumstances, and the importance of ensuring that sanctions are appropriately robust are all matters that need to be kept in mind when decisions are being made. (Item 3.8)
- 3.6** With regard to future presentations by the chairs of the Disciplinary Committee and the Appeals Board, the Chair noted that it would be important to make sure sufficient time was available so as to take account of the likelihood that the presentations would give rise to a considerable level of engagement and discussion. (Item 3.8)
- 3.7** Noted that further comment from an external examiner about a matter relating to the University's plagiarism policy was expected shortly. (Item 3.8)
- 3.8** Noted that the modifications to the ITS Calculate programme to ensure its compatibility with Marks and Standards (as revised in 2010/11) are progressing. (Item 3.9)
- 3.9** Noted that a modification to the regulations on the appointment of external examiners had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 13 April 2011. (Item 3.11)
- 3.10** Noted that an amendment to the Code of Discipline to incorporate a reference to contract cheating (this reference being applicable to all registered students of the University) had been noted by Academic Council at its meeting of 13 April 2011. (Item 3.12)

- 3.11** 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 3.15)
- 3.12** Noted that discussions were in progress with a view to devising templates and identifying application and related deadlines in respect of the policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning. The outcomes of the discussions will be submitted for the consideration of Faculties in Autumn 2011 and, subsequently, will be submitted for approval to Academic Council. (Item 3.16)
- 3.13** Noted that the revised *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 13 April 2011, subject to final comments and amendments. The finalised approved version will be made available to Council on 30 May 2011 and implemented with effect from the 2011/12 academic year. (Item 3.17)
- 3.14** Noted that a list of the publications of a nominated external examiner had been obtained, and the nomination had therefore been approved. (Item 5.1.5)
- 3.15** Noted that, in two cases, the willingness of an external examiner to act for four years as distinct from three had been obtained, and the nominations had therefore been approved. (Items 5.1.7 and 5.1.8)
- 3.16** Noted that clarification in respect of module codes had been obtained, and the nomination of an external examiner had therefore been approved. (Item 5.2.1)
- 3.17** Noted that a list of the modules to be examined had been obtained, and the nomination of an external examiner had therefore been approved. (Item 5.2.9)
- 3.18** Noted that, with respect to the June 2011 diet of examinations, decimalised values for the results would be made available on student portal pages, where relevant. The long-term desirability, or otherwise, of doing this and the possibility of displaying precision marks on portal pages are under discussion in Faculties and will be considered again by the USC (at its meeting of 15 September 2011). Noted that, following the University's decision in the matter of the decimalised values, consideration would be given to the desirability, or otherwise, of considering weightings rather than credits when applying the precision/preponderance rule. (Items 6.1.2, 8.1 and 8.2)
- 3.19** Noted that discussions are in progress about the mechanisms for ensuring progression from BEng to MEng and the desirability or otherwise of using the slash in 'BEng/MEng'. (Item 6.1.4)
- 3.20** With regard to the proposal from Oscail for meeting requests from students, as appropriate, for re-admission with a view to completing programmes – some of

which have been replaced by newer programmes and therefore no longer exist except in respect of these 'legacy' students – it was agreed that a revised version would be submitted for the consideration of the USC at its meeting of 15 September 2011. This revised proposal should include the results of a mapping exercise, as between old and new programmes, that is to be conducted as well as recommendations for the admission, or otherwise as appropriate, of students on a systematic basis. The recommendations will cover, *inter alia*, currency of modules, issues relating to the length of absence from the programme, and practice in respect of ensuring that students undertake such additional study as will ensure that they meet programme learning outcomes in all cases. (Item 6.2.1)

3.21 Noted that the R-40 (Application for Leave of Absence) form had been amended to include, in parentheses, an indication that a Leave of Absence is effectively an extension to the permitted registration period. (Item 6.3.1)

3.22 Noted that amendments to Marks and Standards made at the USC meetings of 3 February 2011 and 7 April 2011 had been approved by Academic Council at its meeting of 13 April 2011. (Item 7.1)

3.23 Noted that the programme team for the Graduate Certificate in Actuarial Applications had undertaken to make every effort to ensure that, in all instances, 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. (Item 7.1)

3.24 Noted that the possibility of displaying on broadsheets marks for contributions in previous years was under consideration. (Item 8.3)

3.25 Noted that minor modifications to the wording of the template for programme-specific regulations had been approved electronically by the USC on 11 April 2011 and by Academic Council at its meeting of 13 April 2011. (Item 8.4)

3.26 Noted that revised meeting dates for the USC for the academic year 2011/12 had been agreed and would be reflected in the University Schedule of Meetings 2011/12. (Item 10.1)

4. Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 3 March 2011

Approved.

SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES

5.1 Appointment of external examiners

- 5.1.1 Professor Paolo Bartolini, National University of Ireland, Galway
MA in Comparative Literature
Approved.
- 5.1.2 Dr Pauline Cullen, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Modules in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved.
- 5.1.3 Dr Martin Veiga, University College Cork
Modules in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved.
- 5.1.4 Dr Matt Davies, University of Chester
Modules in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved subject to further, satisfactory, information about the list of publications.
- 5.1.5 Professor John Tulloch, University of Lincoln
Modules in the School of Communications
Approved.
- 5.1.6 Professor Diane Negra, University College Dublin
Modules in the School of Communications
Decision deferred pending discussion with the School of Communications.
- 5.1.7 Dr Tony Hall, National University of Ireland, Galway
Modules in the School of Education Studies
Approved.
- 5.1.8 Dr Rob Mark, University of Strathclyde
BSc in Education and Training (full time and part time)
Approved.
- 5.1.9 Ms Shazia Choudhury, Queen Mary, University of London
Modules in the School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 5.1.10 Ms Gráinne McKeever, University of Ulster
Modules in the School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 5.1.11 Professor Lorna Fox O'Mahony, Durham University
Modules in the School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 5.1.12 Dr David Capper, Queen's University Belfast
Modules in the School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 5.1.13 Professor Aleš Černý, City University
MSc in Financial and Industrial Mathematics
Approved.
- 5.1.14 Dr Martin McNamara, University College Dublin
Modules in the School of Nursing

- Approved.
- 5.1.15 Ms Paula Procter, Sheffield Hallam University
Bachelor of Nursing Theory, Bachelor of Nursing Studies
Approved.
- 5.1.16 Professor Eileen Savage, University College Cork
Modules in the School of Nursing
Approved.
- 5.1.17 Ms Linda Childs, University of Southampton
Certificate in Nurse/Midwife Prescribing
Approved.
- 5.1.18 Dr Andrew Fogarty, Athlone Institute of Technology
MSc in the Management of Sustainable Development
Decision deferred pending information on whether the workload envisaged is feasible for the nominee, whether there is cognacy of expertise in terms of the wide range of modules listed, and whether the nominee is proposed as a programme or a module examiner. Upon receipt of the information, a decision on the nomination will be taken by means of Chair's action and notified to the USC.
- 5.1.19 Professor Kathy Hall, University College Cork
Bachelor of Education programme, Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary Teaching), St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.1.20 Professor Mark Boyle, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Modules in Geography on the BA in Humanities and the Bachelor of Education programme, St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.1.21 Dr Orla O'Donovan, University College Cork
BSc in Health and Society
Approved.

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

- 5.2.1 Professor Geraldine Sheridan, University of Limerick
Modules in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved subject to clarification of whether a renewal of appointment or a change to duties is envisaged.
- 5.2.2 Dr Maeve Olohan, University of Manchester
Modules in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved.
- 5.2.3 Dr Anders Fagerjord, university of Oslo
Modules in the School of Communications
Approved.
- 5.2.4 Dr Jack Anderson, Queen's University Belfast
Modules in the School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 5.2.5 Professor Colm O'Conneide, University College London

- Modules in the School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 5.2.6 Dr Shane Kilcommins, University College Cork
Modules in the School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 5.2.7 Mr Ian Beech, University of Glamorgan
BSc in Nursing (Mental Health)
Approved.
- 5.2.8 Professor Janice Wearmouth, University of Bedfordshire
Modules in Special/Inclusive Education in the Education Department, St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.2.9 Ms Claire Connolly, St Mary's University College, Belfast
Modules in Teaching Practice on the Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary Teaching), Education Department, St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.2.10 Professor Gerard Gillen, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Modules in Music on the BA in Humanities and the Bachelor of Education programme, St Patrick's College
Approved.
- 5.2.11 Dr Peter McGrail, Liverpool Hope University
MA in Leadership and Pastoral Care, All Hallows College
Approved.
- 5.2.12 Professor Richard Timoney, Trinity College
Common Entry Programme into Actuarial, Financial and Mathematical Sciences, and BSc in Applicable Mathematics
Approved.
- 5.2.13 Dr Paddy Connolly, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick
BA in Theology and Lifelong Education, School of Education, Mater Dei Institute of Education
Approved.

6. Other issues

6.1 Dublin City University Business School

6.1.1 Request for re-admission to the MSc in Business Management programme 2010/11

Decision deferred pending further discussion. Concern was expressed that, since the candidate had previously failed the dissertation, a September 2011 submission date might compromise the candidate's ability to produce acceptable work on time. The Chair is to discuss the matter further with Mr Billy Kelly, Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in Dublin City University Business School, and a decision

on the matter will, if appropriate, be taken by means of Chair's action and communicated to the USC.

6.2 Faculty of Engineering and Computing

6.2.1 Request for re-admission to the MEng in Telecommunications Engineering

Approved subject to a stipulation that the proposed deadline for completion of the programme may be extended if it becomes apparent that this is necessary.

6.3 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

6.3.1 Request from a graduate of the Graduate Diploma in Journalism for admission to the MA in Journalism

Decision deferred on the basis that, in the case of all such requests and in particular requests from candidates whose period of prior study in the University predated the advent of ECTS credits and the National Framework of Qualifications, due consideration needs to be given to considerations of currency and equity. Noted that the Programme Board is equally concerned that these matters be appropriately addressed, and for this reason the Programme Board is invited to draw up a proposal for an overall, systematic approach to the management of requests such as the present one. This invitation is extended with a view to ensuring that a template exists against which current and future requests can be mapped so that due account may be taken of all relevant factors including (as is the case with the current candidate) extensive professional experience, currency of modules (or, pre-modularisation, subjects) previously taken, appropriateness of such modules/subjects from the perspective of the achievement of the learning outcomes of the MA in Journalism, and approach to be taken when granting exemptions in a situation where no credits were obtained by the candidate because the ECTS credit system was not in operation at the time. Following the submission of the proposal on this matter, the USC will consider the request by the current candidate and by any other candidates who may make similar requests in future.

6.4 Agreed that, henceforth, requests for re-admission to programmes following absence greater than that normally allowed under Marks and Standards, and requests such as that mentioned at 6.3.1 above, would be submitted on the template designed for this purpose. Agreed to amend the template as follows: (a) a request to specify the date of initial registration on the programme will be included; (b) the reference to 'proposed date of completion of programme' will be amended to a reference to the maximum completion time for the programme (to allow for flexibility as and when appropriate).

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)

7. Marks and Standards

7.1 Proposals from the Working Group on Non-major Awards

7.1.1 Approved. Noted that the Working Group had taken NQAI definitions as starting-points and had developed these. Noted that it was likely that any future developments in terms of programmes at Level 7 would take place on the basis that external funding was made available for them. Noted that the next step for the Working Group, provided Academic Council approval of the proposals was forthcoming, would be to develop an approval procedure for non-major awards and submit this for the consideration of the Education Committee at its meeting of 7 September 2011. The USC will be kept informed of developments in this regard. The Chair expressed appreciation, on behalf of the USC, to Mr Billy Kelly, chair of the Working Group, and the other members of the Group for the work they had done to date.

7.1.2 The proposals entail the following change to Marks and Standards:

- Table 1: *Awards offered by DCU on the NFQ* will be altered by the addition of a row allowing a Graduate Certificate at Level 9 as a Supplemental Award.

7.1.3 Additionally, the following change to Marks and Standards was approved:

- Table 3: *DCU Module Level Indicators* and Table 4: *Module Strength Indicators* will each be altered by the addition of a row referring to Graduate Diploma (because it was inadvertently omitted from previous versions of Marks and Standards).

7.2 Request for a derogation from Marks and Standards in respect of the Certificate in Nurse/Midwife Prescribing

Approved.

7.3 Request in respect of an existing derogation from Marks and Standards for the BSc in Physical Education with Biology

The request for an extension to the derogation on an ongoing basis was approved subject to the continuation of two projects by the members of the programme team: they are requested to maintain dialogue with the Teaching Council with a view to having professional requirements for Physical Education teachers clearly specified in Council documentation; they are requested to continue to examine the possibility of providing alternative assessment mechanisms that would obviate the need for the derogation.

8. Programme-specific regulations 2011/12

- 8.1** Approved. Noted that, from 2012/13, the draft regulations would be made available to the USC membership electronically as usual but, to facilitate and streamline the approval process, specific changes from the previous year would be highlighted and it could be assumed that regulations stayed the same in all instances in which no changes were highlighted. Noted that the most detailed consideration of regulations takes place at Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education meetings.

9. Proposal for an amendment to the University's English-language requirements

- 9.1** The following points were noted in discussion:

- this is an issue about which there tends to be a wide range of views
- students whose English is relatively weak often tend to require additional supports, but the resources for these are not always available
- the module offered by SALIS to assist non-native speakers to improve their standards of academic English has been found to make a positive difference
- in the rare cases in which students (normally research students) are permitted to register without having fulfilled the English-language requirements, consideration might be given to setting cut-off dates by which they must fulfil these requirements
- there is a risk that allowing such students to register may leave them vulnerable to failure in their studies
- it would be very helpful to take account of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) when considering the University's English-language requirements (it was noted in this connection that this framework specifies C2 as the minimum appropriate level for research students).

- 9.2** The following were agreed:

- the Chair will request Ms Aisling McKenna, Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, to provide information on the progress of students who were registered without having met the minimum English-language requirements, with a view to establishing an evidence base for future decision-making in this matter
- the issue of English-language requirements will be discussed again at the meeting of the Graduate Studies Board of 30 June 2011 (since the proposal originated with the GSB), taking account of the submission made to the present meeting, the points listed under 9.1 above and a paper approved by the USC at its meeting of 4 June 2009 (this paper recommended raising the requirements in respect of the TOEFL examinations).

- 9.3** Noted that the matter would very probably require discussion in Faculties following the GSB meeting of 30 June 2011.

10. External examiners

10.1 Management of communication with external examiners

Noted that practice varies somewhat across the University and that it would be desirable to ensure that a set of commonly-agreed and widely-recognised procedures were put in place and implemented. Noted that, in some cases, there is conformity of practice within Faculties and that it would be helpful for the procedures that will be proposed to be discussed in Faculties prior to being submitted for approval to the USC. Agreed that Ms McDermott would work with relevant colleagues over the Summer months to develop the proposed procedures, that these would be discussed at Faculty Teaching and Learning/Education Committee meetings in the early Autumn and that they would be submitted (revised as appropriate) for the consideration of the USC at its meeting of 17 November 2011.

10.2 Proposals on the management of external examiners' recommendations

Approved. The Chair expressed appreciation, on behalf of the USC, to Ms Mairéad Guinan of the Registry for the work she had done in co-ordinating the proposals thus far. Agreed that the next step would be to identify and put in place the necessary technological supports for what is proposed; to this end, further consultation will take place shortly with Information Systems and Services. Agreed that, following this, the Heads' and Deans' group should be made aware formally of what is proposed and that, therefore, the matter would be included on the agenda of a meeting of this group as soon as possible.

11. Proposals on the submission of feedback to students

11.1 The Chair noted that, in relation to many of the staff nominated for the President's Awards for Teaching and Learning which were made on 11 May 2011, the citation mentioned excellence in giving feedback as one of the reasons the nomination had been made. Following from recent related discussions, it has been agreed that a two-and-a-half day symposium on feedback and related issues will take place from 11 to 13 September 2011. This symposium is intended to function as a way of both celebrating excellence in teaching (e.g. by means of excellent feedback) and highlighting engagement as an important theme for the academic year 2011/12. The current plan is that many of the sessions will be facilitated by nominees for, or winners of, the President's Award. The organisation of the event will be undertaken by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education. Mr Byrne and other Students' Union representatives will be

closely involved. The dates of the conference will be announced to Academic Council and in other relevant fora.

- 11.2** Among the desired outcomes of the symposium will be to identify basic minimum standards in terms of giving feedback, to develop ways of managing the expectations of both staff and students and identifying and bridging gaps in understanding, and to collate good practice with a view to implementing it widely over a one-to-three-year timeframe.
- 11.3** Dr Brabazon undertook to send to the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education contact details for a staff member in the University of Manchester who is particularly knowledgeable in the area of feedback.

12. Proposals on awarding Higher Doctorates

The Chair noted that these proposals were due for final consideration by Executive and that, following approval there, they would be submitted for approval to Academic Council and made available to the members of the USC and GSB. Once the approval process is complete, the possibility of awarding Higher Doctorates will be available to the University with effect from the academic year 2011/12. The Chair thanked the members of the GSB for their work in developing the initial proposals.

13. Management of items submitted between meetings

Noted that timely submission of items is essential if they are to get due consideration by the members of the USC. This matter will be raised again, and procedures for 2011/12 agreed, at the annual meeting to agree protocols for the management of USC meetings in the following academic year. (This meeting will take place in August or September 2011.)

14. Any other business

- 14.1** The Chair noted that this present meeting was the last one which Professor Gary Murphy would attend in his capacity as Dean of Graduate Studies and, on behalf of the USC, she thanked him for his very significant contribution to the work of the USC and also for his work as chair of the Graduate Studies Board since its inception in September 2007.
- 14.2** The Chair invited the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education to attend the meeting of the Heads' and Deans' group on the afternoon of 26 May for the discussion on graduate attributes.

Date of next meeting:

**15 September 2011
9.00 a.m. in A204**

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____