UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 30 September 2010

9.00-11.35 a.m. in A204

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

The Chair welcomed Dr Dermot Brabazon, who will represent the Associate Deans for Research on the University Standards Committee in 2010/11, to his first meeting. She also welcomed Mr Paul Sheehan, who will represent the Directors of the Library and ISS on the USC in 2010/11.

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1.   Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of an additional submission under Item 5.2 and a submission under Item 10.

2.   Minutes of the meeting of 3 June 2010

The minutes, which had been confirmed electronically on 16 June 2010, were signed by the Chair.

3.   Matters arising from the minutes

3.1   Noted that the report of the Technical Subgroup of the Teaching Qualifications Working Group was the definitive one and not an interim one. This report outlines

the recommendation made by the Subgroup to the IUA Registrars that concurrent and consecutive teacher education programmes be placed at Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications. An intention was expressed of supporting institutions which offer such programmes to revise them in a way that will allow them to be placed at Level 9 at a future date. <u>Noted</u> that the Graduate Diploma in Education offered by the School of Education Studies is not referred to in university literature in terms of levels. On the issue of the placing on the NFQ of 'conversion' Graduate Diplomas in areas other than teaching, it was <u>agreed</u> that an exercise would be conducted to ascertain whether or not an NFQ level had been specified for any of them at accreditation (some predate the setting up of the NFQ), and that relevant developments in the sector would be monitored. Ms McMorrow <u>noted</u> that the discussions were in progress with Faculties about the placing of post-1989 University qualifications generally on the NFQ. (Item 3.2)

3.2   <u>Noted</u> that the draft revised *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* would be on the agenda of the meeting of the USC of 2 December 2010. (Item 3.4)

3.3   <u>Noted</u> that it would be important to progress discussions about the fitness of purpose, or otherwise, of the 'mother' and 'child' module system because of the forthcoming need to plan for the 2011/12 academic structures. (Item 3.5)

3.4   <u>Noted</u> that the forms for submission to Faculty Committees and the Education Committee in respect of proposed changes to programmes and related matters were now available on line. (Item 3.8)

3.5   <u>Noted</u> that the revised regulations and guidelines on validation and accreditation had been drawn up and approved by the Education Committee and were now available on line. (Item 3.8)

3.6   <u>Noted</u> that discussions were in progress between the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and the Registry to ascertain the implications of a possible extended academic session, that no situations which might necessitate the creation of such a session had arisen since the implementation of the current Marks and Standards and that any such situations which might arise would be identified and appropriate action taken to support the students involved. (Item 3.10)

3.7   <u>Noted</u> that the current Marks and Standards had different implications than the previous ones, in financial terms, for students repeating modules with large numbers of credits attached, such as 30-credit dissertations on taught Master's programmes. <u>Agreed</u> that this issue would be kept under review to ascertain whether or not it might prove advisable to submit a proposal on the issue to Budget Committee. <u>Agreed</u> that Mr Byrne would brief the Heads of School on the issue at one of the forthcoming Heads' meetings. <u>Noted</u> that the Faculty Teaching

and Learning/Education Committees also had the potential to be helpful in encouraging awareness of the issue. (Item 3.11)

3.8   Noted that the policy on leave of absence had been approved by Academic Council on 10 June 2010 and that all stakeholders had been informed about it. Noted too that it was being monitored on an ongoing basis in terms of its implications for Oscail students. (Item 3.12)

3.9   Noted that the recommendations of the Learning Innovation Advisory Panel on shared teaching, which were the subject of a recommendation from the 1 April 2010 meeting of the USC to the 9 June 2010 meeting of Academic Council, would be further discussed by Council at its meeting of 13 October 2010.   (Item 3.12)

3.10   With respect to the development of guidelines for the supervision of projects, it was agreed that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education would ascertain current practice in Faculties and identify and seek to address any gaps in provision that might emerge.   (Item 3.13)

3.11   With respect to the development of marking grids, it was noted that they had the potential to be helpful for both staff and students in terms of clarifying expectations, facilitating feedback on performance and encouraging students to focus on essential elements in terms of their academic performance. It was agreed that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education would source examples from both Ireland and the UK with a view to determining the extent to which a common template, or a small number of templates tailored to different broad discipline areas, might be developed. The Chair requested the Associate Deans to report to the USC on progress in this matter. (Item 3.13)

3.12   Noted that none of the students on the Doctorate of Music in Performance in the Royal Irish Academy was due to graduate in the near future. The Chair noted that discussions were due to begin with the incoming new Director of the RIAM, Ms Deborah Kelleher, with a view to ensuring that the formal relationship between the RIAM and the University is appropriate for current needs. (Item 4)

3.13   Noted that additional information was awaited about a nominated external examiner. (Item 5.1.3)

3.14   Noted that clarification had been obtained in respect of two nominated external examiners, and the nominations had therefore been approved. (Item 5.1.4)

3.15   Noted that additional information had been obtained in respect of a nominated external examiner, and the nomination had therefore been approved. (Item 5.1.5)

3.16   <u>Noted</u> that confirmation of an issue had been obtained in respect of a nominated external examiner, and the nomination had therefore been approved. (Item 5.1.10)

3.17   <u>Noted</u> that clarification of an issue had been obtained in respect of a nominated external examiner, and the nomination had therefore been approved. (Item 5.2.3)

3.18   <u>Noted</u> that a School which had been requested to identify an alternative external examiner to the person originally nominated was in the process of seeking such an examiner. (Item 5.2.5)

3.19   <u>Noted</u> that further discussion had taken place in respect of a nominated external examiner, that the outcome had proved satisfactory, and that the nomination had therefore been approved. (Item 5.2.8)

3.20   <u>Noted</u> that additional information had been obtained in respect of a nominated external examiner, and the nomination had therefore been approved. (Item 5.2.12)

3.21   <u>Noted</u> that a Programme Board was giving consideration to alternative marking mechanisms for 2011/12 and beyond. (Item 7.3.1)

3.22   <u>Noted</u> that a document clarifying aspects of Marks and Standards had been made available to Academic Council at its meeting of 9 June 2010, that Council had approved the document subject to modifications, and that a revised document had been made available to all relevant staff on 10 June 2010. (Item 7.4.6)

3.23   <u>Noted</u> that the 2010/11 programme-specific regulations were available on the Registry website and that a note had been placed beside them to indicate that they would shortly be confirmed. This is because, in a small number of cases, changes need to be made to reflect recent Programme Board decisions made in the light of experience of running programmes in 2009/10, and reapproval is therefore required. (Item 8)

3.24   <u>Noted</u> that a report and recommendations on the Recognition of Prior Learning would be made to the 3 February 2011 meeting of the USC with a view to having a policy and procedures at University level in place for 2011/12. Prior to February 2010, discussions will continue at sectoral level and, in addition, a draft policy will be circulated to Faculties with a request for feedback. The Chair advised that communication should take place with Professor Murphy and the Graduate Research Office on the issue of admission of research students on the basis of advanced standing, and also that contact should be initiated with the education function of IBEC to ascertain the business and industry view. (Item 10.1)

3.25   <u>Noted</u> that the final version of the revised Marks and Standards for All Hallows College had been approved by the Academic Council in All Hallows on 29 June 2010. (Item 11)

4.   **Minutes of the Graduate Studies Board meetings of 6 May 2010 and 1 July 2010**

4.1   <u>Approved</u> subject to the correction of an error in Item 8.2 of the minutes of the meeting of 1 July 2010. The relevant sentence will now read: 'Another, related, issue is the question of indicative hours of work per credit for GTEs: the standard in DCU is twenty-five hours per credit, but the figure in other institutions may be different.'

4.2   With regard to the availability of 2.5-credit modules as Graduate Training Elements, it was <u>noted</u> that these existed with respect to 2010/11 on the basis of a derogation from Marks and Standards and that the question of their existence beyond that would be discussed by the USC upon receipt of a proposal to that effect.

4.3   It was <u>noted</u> that the PAC system for handling applications for admission from prospective research students was about to be tested in the Registry with a view to having it available for use at the beginning of the calendar year 2011.

SECTION B: **FACULTY ISSUES**

5.1   **Appointment of external examiners**

5.1.1   Ms Martina O'Brien, Irish Taxation Institute
         Modules in Taxation in Dublin City University Business School
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.2   Dr Shane Kilcommins, University College Cork
         BCL (Law and Society)
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.3   Dr Neville Cox, Trinity College Dublin
         BCL (Law and Society)
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.4   Dr Jack Anderson, Queen's University Belfast
         BCL (Law and Society)
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.5   Professor Tomasz Jerzy Zastawniak, University of York
         BSc in Financial Mathematics
         <u>Approved</u> subject to confirmation of the list of final-year modules to be examined.

5.1.6   Professor Liam Murphy, University College Dublin
         BSc in Information Technology, MSc in Management of Internet Systems
         <u>Approved</u> subject to confirmation that the nominee's commitments with respect to
         external examining in other institutions will allow him sufficient capacity to
         act as external examiner for DCU.
5.1.7   Dr Joan Hanafin, University College Cork
         Teaching practice on the BEd and Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary
         Teaching) programmes, St Patrick's College
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.1.8   Mr David McCormack, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
         MA in Supervisory Practice, All Hallows College
         <u>Approved</u> subject to confirmation that the nominee's commitments with respect to
         external examining in other institutions will allow him sufficient capacity to
         act as external examiner for DCU.
5.1.9   Mr Seamus Mac Gabhann, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
         Modules in English, All Hallows College
         <u>Approved.</u> <u>Agreed</u> that clarification about an issue mentioned on the nomination
         form would be sought.

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

5.2.1   Mr Colm O'Cinneide, University College London
         Modules in Law in the School of Law and Government
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.2.2   Dr Mary Donnelly, University College Cork
         Modules in Law in the School of Law and Government
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.2.3   Professor Hassan Abdalla, De Montfort University
         BEng/BSc/MSc in Manufacturing Engineering with Business Studies
         <u>Approved.</u>
5.2.4   Professor Colin Feltham, Sheffield Hallam University
         MSc in Psychotherapy and Professional Doctorate in Psychotherapy
         <u>Approved.</u>

<u>Noted</u> that, where a nominee is indicated as having retired, it would be helpful to indicate
the date of retirement on the relevant form.

The Chair <u>noted</u> that, pending the approval and implementation of the proposed new
regulations on the appointment of external examiners (see Item 8 below), nominations
would be dealt with on the basis of the present regulations.

6.   Other issues

   Faculty of Science and Health

6.1   Student (1) who wishes to re-register on the BNS programme following a break in registration (since 2004/05)

   Approved subject to a stipulation that the student must complete the programme in the academic session 2010/11.

6.2   Student (2) who wishes to re-register on the BNS programme following a break in registration (since 2004/05)

   Approved subject to a stipulation that the student must complete the programme in the academic session 2010/11.

   Faculty of Engineering and Computing

6.3   Student who wishes to re-register on the MEN programme following a break in registration (since 1996/97)

   Approved subject to a stipulation that the student need not necessarily complete the programme in 2010/11, given the considerable workload to be undertaken, but could avail of the standard period of completion specified in Marks and Standards if this proved necessary.

SECTION C: OTHER ISSUES (NOT FACULTY SPECIFIC)

7.   Marks and Standards, including issues arising from their application at the June 2010 and September 2010 Progression and Awards Boards

7.1   On the issue of allowing more than one repeat academic session, it was agreed to add a new section to Marks and Standards to indicate that, in exceptional circumstances, a Progression and Awards Board may permit such a session. Decisions must be made on a case-by-case basis. An advisory document will be drawn up by the Registry which will include examples of situations designed to provide background for both this and other stipulations in Marks and Standards as appropriate. USC members are requested to submit suggestions for inclusions to Ms McMorrow. The document will include examples of what does *not* constitute exceptional circumstances which might be deemed to justify allowing more than one repeat academic session. It was noted that further discussion would be required to address the issue of allowing more than one repeat academic session for a failed

module (or a number of failed modules) as distinct from a failed year of a programme.

7.2   On the issue of the precision mark calculation, it was <u>noted</u> that it had been clarified at Progression and Awards Boards in 2010 that in all instances the calculation is based on the first attempt at all modules, and where an alternative module is taken it is the original module mark which counts towards the calculation of the precision mark. The USC endorsed these stipulations and <u>agreed</u> that the reasoning with regard to the alternative module (i.e. the reason the mark for the alternative module is not counted whereas the mark for the original failed module is) would be clarified in the advisory document referred to above. (<u>Noted</u> that the reason is to provide equity of treatment for all students.)

7.3   It was <u>agreed</u> to hold a meeting of the USC Subgroup on Marks and Standards at the earliest opportunity to consider the issue of continuous assessment resits and a number of other matters.[1]

7.4   A proposal on a legacy issue relating to the credit rating for the MSc in Plasma and Vacuum Technology offered jointly with Queen's University Belfast, which had previously been approved by Chair's action, was <u>noted</u>.

8.   External examiners

8.1   Revised appointment regulations

8.1.1   The proposals were <u>approved</u> subject to the following:
- the deletion of the word 'normally' in the fourth line of proposal number two
- the insertion of a footnote to clarify the reference to the linked colleges.

8.1.2   It was <u>agreed</u> that consideration should be given to permitting an external examiner to serve in two different areas of the University (including the linked colleges) concurrently, on the basis that this may afford an opportunity for the examiner to gain oversight of subject provision in broadly similar areas and identify possible gaps and synergies.

8.1.3   It was <u>agreed</u> that an external examiner who had served in one area of the University (including the linked colleges) would not be considered for approval to serve in another area notwithstanding the lapse of the appropriate time period.[2]

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[1] In the event, two Subgroup meetings took place. The minutes of these meetings are available as appendices to the present document. Discussion of Item 1 of the second meeting actually began during the first meeting, but all the relevant references are in Item 1 of the minutes of the second meeting for ease of reading.

8.1.4   It was <u>agreed</u> that the current guidelines for the appointment of external examiners would be revised on the basis of the proposals and that the revised version would be submitted for approval to the USC at its meeting of 2 December 2010 with a view to Academic Council approval subsequently and implementation from 2011/12. The Chair advised that it would be essential, in the revised version, to distinguish clearly between guidelines and regulations.

8.2   **Update on procedures for communicating external examiners' recommendations**

It was <u>noted</u> that discussions were in progress with a view to identifying and implementing an online system for the management and promulgation of external examiners' recommendations. Following discussion of the proposed new procedures on which such a system would be based, however, it was <u>agreed</u> that it would be advisable to suspend these discussions for the moment pending the conduct of an exercise in the Faculties, led by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education, to ascertain the fitness for purpose of the current procedures. Additionally, the issues relating to the timing of the introduction of the proposed new online system are to be discussed by a group consisting of the Chair, Ms Bruton, Ms McMorrow and Ms Barbara McConalogue, Director of Information Systems and Services.

9.   **Revisions to the procedure for making *aegrotat* awards in respect of taught programmes**

<u>Agreed</u> that further consideration needed to be given to (a) the question of whether or not a student who unexpectedly overcomes an apparently permanent disability having previously received an *aegrotat* award should be permitted to register for and complete the standard award, and (b) the question of whether or not an *aegrotat* award might be made on an unclassified basis (taking account of the fact that unclassified awards are not made for other reasons).

10.   **Any other business**

<u>Noted</u> that, with effect from the meeting of 2 December 2010, the papers for the USC meetings would be made available in electronic rather than hard copy, with the exception of forms EE1 (nomination of external examiners) and EE2 (renewal of appointment/changes to duties).

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[2] Following further consideration after the meeting, the Chair advised that this proposed regulation should not be implemented. This advice will be incorporated into the document to be submitted for approval to the USC at its meeting of 2 December 2010 (see Item 8.1.4 of these minutes).

Date of next meeting:

2 December 2010
9.00 a.m. in A204

Signed: _____   Date: _____
          Chair

APPENDIX 1

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF SUBGROUP MEETING

Thursday 30 September 2010

12.15-1.35 p.m. in A204

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Françoise Blin,
                       Ms Jennifer Bruton, Ms Bernadette Dowling, Mr Billy Kelly,
                       Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Ms Phylomena McMorrow,
                       Dr Sheelagh Wickham

1.1   On the issue of the statement in Marks and Standards that 'Progression is
           determined according to the approved academic requirements of the programme of
           study' (Section 7.1.8), it was <u>noted</u> that programme-specific regulations, in some
           instances, did not specify what is required to progress and instead referred back to
           7.1.8 (which does not prescribe requirements for individual programmes). It was
           <u>agreed</u> that all programme-specific regulations would be reviewed to ascertain
           whether or not there was a need to include a statement to make the progression
           requirement clear. The statement will be as follows: 'Students must obtain a
           minimum of 60 credits in the academic session to progress to the next academic
           session', except that where the relevant number of credits is other than 60 that
           number will be specified instead. The Associate Deans for Teaching and
           Learning/Education will let Programme Chairs know that this is being done, where
           relevant.

1.2   On the issue of Special-Purpose, Supplemental and Minor awards, it was <u>noted</u> that
               developmental work needed to be done, not merely in DCU but sector wide.
           Issues, including budgetary issues, relating to the 'cashing in' of stand-alone
           modules for   awards were <u>noted</u>. It was <u>agreed</u> that the framework in use in the
           Faculty of   Engineering and Computing, which facilitated such 'cashing in',
           might be helpful to   the USC in its further discussions, and Ms Bruton undertook
           to circulate it to the   members. It was also <u>noted</u> that examples of practice in
           respect of these matters   could be sought internationally, particularly in UK
           universities. It was <u>agreed</u> that a

working paper on these matters should be drafted and submitted for the consideration of the USC at its meeting of 2 December 2010. It was <u>noted</u> that another issue requiring discussion is that of International Foundation Certificates, particularly in relation to their appropriate level on the NFQ and their potential for being considered exit awards. The development of Certificates of Continuing Professional Development will also need to be addressed in due course.

1.3   With regard to the issue of credit attribution to Master's degrees by research, it was <u>noted</u> that a discrepancy existed between Marks and Standards and the draft revised *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*. It was also <u>noted</u> that wide variation existed between the minimum stipulated for a taught Master's degree (90 credits) and the potential maximum for a research Master's degree (210 credits), with the former being low by comparison with norms in other countries within the Bologna system and the latter appearing unfeasibly high in terms of student workload. It was also <u>noted</u> that a Master's programme with 60 credits attaching to it now exists in the University and that, while this is compatible with Marks and Standards, the credit attribution is particularly low by international standards. Consistency with practice in the external environment was <u>noted</u> as being necessary also in respect of the attribution of credits to the range of types of doctorate including traditional PhD, structured PhD and taught doctorate. <u>Agreed</u> that Professor Gary Murphy should be consulted on these issues and requested to make recommendations on them in consultation with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education and the members of the Graduate Studies Board.

1.4   The Chair <u>noted</u> that the issue of Bologna compliance would feature as an agenda item on one of the meetings of the USC in the first half of 2011.

1.5   It was <u>noted</u> that, where a student is granted exemptions from a module or modules, he/she may have fewer than the required number of credits for the programme notwithstanding having passed the programme and graduated. This is not an outcome of the new Marks and Standards; it featured also under the previous version. It was <u>agreed</u> that this matter needed further consideration and that the ongoing work on Recognition of Prior Learning might not necessarily yield solutions because RPL and transfer/exemptions are separate concepts.

APPENDIX 2

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF SUBGROUP MEETING

Thursday 30 September 2010

4.15-4.45 p.m. in the Executive Room, Albert College Building

Present: Professor Anne Scott (Chair), Dr Françoise Blin,
                            Ms Jennifer Bruton, Mr Cillian Byrne, Mr Billy Kelly,
                            Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Sheelagh Wickham

1.   On the issue of regulations governing resit opportunities for failed continuous assessment, it was <u>noted</u> that, with respect to the Summer and Autumn 2010 Progression and Awards Boards and with the approval of Academic Council (on 10 June 2010), some leeway had been afforded in terms of making local arrangements. Experience of these PABs had indicated that further discussion would be required to clarify the position for 2010/11 and beyond. A number of proposals on the issue from the Faculty of Engineering and Computing and the Faculty of Science and Health were considered. It was <u>agreed</u> that a document containing proposals for consideration by Faculties would be submitted to the full USC for approval and then circulated to stakeholders by the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education with requests for feedback within a short timeframe so as to facilitate the making of decisions on the issue, their approval, and their promulgation to staff and students in a timely manner.