

## **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

Wednesday 14 January 2009

2.00-3.45 p.m. in A204

**Present:** Professor Maria Slowey (Chair), Dr Françoise Blin,  
Mr Jim Dowling, Professor Eugene Kennedy,  
Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Kay MacKeogh,  
Professor Bernard Pierce, Professor Anne Scott,  
Dr Mary Shine Thompson, Professor Malcolm Smyth

**Apologies:** Dr Claire Bohan, Ms Susan Hurley, Mr Gordon McConnell

**In attendance:** Dr Séamus Fox (for Item 6)  
Ms Aisling McKenna (for Items 5 and 7)

#### **SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of 3 December 2008**

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**3. Matters arising from the minutes**

- 3.1** Noted that, at its meeting of 10 December 2008, the Academic Council had approved an accreditation proposal subject to agreement on a number of NFQ-related issues which had been the subject of recommendations from the Education Committee to the Council, that agreement had been reached on these

- issues with the programme proposers and that they were undertaking the consequent rewriting of the accreditation proposal (particularly with regard to learning outcomes) and would have finished this by 6 February 2009. (Item 3.1)
- 3.2** Noted that a number of discussions had taken place in the university, particularly at the University Standards Committee and in the context of the development of the Academic Framework for Innovation, about the need to resolve issues relating to the alignment of the university's awards with the National Framework of Qualifications, but that resolution at university level was in fact not possible because the issues are sector wide. Agreed, therefore, that the Chair would raise the issues with the IUA Registrars' Group. (Item 3.1)
- 3.3** Noted that, while details of the HEA funding allocation for the current academic year were now available and would be analysed by Budget Committee at its meeting of 20 January 2009, an issue – the weighting of students on work placement – remained unresolved with regard to the allocation for the coming academic year. Agreed that the Chair would consult the Director of Finance with a view to formulating a response to the HEA's letter outlining the proposal. (Item 3.2)
- 3.4** Noted that the terms of reference of the Education Committee had been approved by the Academic Council at its meeting of 10 December 2008. (Item 3.3)
- 3.5** Noted that the validation report on the addition of an English-language stream to the BA in International Business and Languages, incorporating revised English-language entry requirements, had been approved by the Academic Council at its meeting of 10 December 2008. (Item 3.5)
- 3.6** Noted that the programme proposers for the new undergraduate degree in Psychology are aiming for Autumn 2010 as the launch date. (Item 3.6)
- 3.7** Noted that the working group which the Education Committee had, at its meeting of 3 December 2008, established to make recommendations on programme review had held its first meeting and that a second meeting was planned for 29 January 2009. (Item 4.3)
- 3.8** Noted that the Chair intended to bring together a group of interested parties (to include the Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, the Director of SIF Programmes, the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in DCU Business School and a member of the School of Education Studies) with a view to formulating recommendations on issues relating to teaching quality. Noted that the Business School had undertaken to participate in a pilot project on student evaluation of teaching as soon as the procedures for this were agreed. (Item 4.4)

- 3.9** Noted that, because the level of SIF 2 funding to be made available would be lower than originally envisaged, the university had decided to prioritise two of the four strands identified in the original submission for funding, i.e. Enhancement of Learning and Graduate Education. The university will still participate in the work of the other two strands, Internationalisation and Widening Participation, but will not commit funds to them. (Item 5)
- 3.10** Noted that the new financial model for use with validation proposals, approved by the Education Committee at its meeting of 3 December 2008, had been incorporated into the two proposals under consideration at the present meeting (see Items 4.1 and 4.2 below) and that Mr Eamonn Cuggy, Finance Officer, would make a presentation on it to the meeting of the Executive of 27 January 2009. (Item 7)

## **SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **4. Decisions on validation proposals:**

#### **4.1 BSc (Hons) in Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing: bridging programme to be delivered by distance mode**

Agreed to discuss this proposal again at the 4 February 2009 meeting of the Education Committee and, in the meantime, to obtain further information from the programme proposers about the procedures which a person registered as a nurse in Canada must undergo in order to be permitted to practise in Ireland. Information will also be made available to the meeting about the mechanisms by which the university satisfies itself as to the standing of an external organisation with which it proposes to develop a relationship and the extent to which previous discussions within the university have made recommendations as to the minimum number of credits a student must obtain in the university (as distinct from an institution previously attended) for a university award to be considered justified.

#### **4.2 BSc (Hons) in Aviation Management**

Agreed to refer this proposal to the Validation Subgroup for detailed consideration. The following were identified as issues to be raised by the Subgroup with the programme proposers: the NFQ level at which it is proposed to award the degree to those who take the Pilot Studies option; the proposed designation as a Bachelor of Science degree; possible implications for the university's strategic commitment to sustainability from an environmental perspective; the possibility that the programme might, in time, be delivered on a part-time basis; the composition of the Accreditation Board (in the event of successful validation).

## **5. Presentation on module viability**

- 5.1** Among the issues noted by Dr Blin in her presentation were the following: the importance of distinguishing between programmes and awards; the importance of reliable and transparent online information about all modules; the need to achieve an overall balance, across a given suite of modules, between those which are fully subscribed or even over-subscribed and those with low numbers of students; the fact that considerations other than student numbers can influence decisions on whether or not to retain modules (for example, a module with low student numbers might be necessary for strategic reasons or to provide a basis for research in the subject area).
- 5.2** The Deputy President noted that these issues are very closely related to the development of the Academic Framework for Innovation and that this development would generate a number of important topics requiring discussion from a strategic perspective as well as a need to engage in timely decision-making on the basis of the outcome of the discussion. She emphasised the importance of keeping the Education Committee abreast of all these matters.

## **6. Presentation on Strategic Plan – Enhancement of Learning component strategy**

- 6.1** Dr Séamus Fox of the E-Learning Development Initiative outlined the priority areas for action identified in the Enhancement of Learning strategic plan, which is currently under development, as well as the next steps to be taken to finalise the plan. Among the points raised in the ensuing discussion were the following: the importance of ensuring that the university community felt a sense of ownership in relation to the plan and regarded it as an enabling mechanism vis-à-vis teaching and learning; the need to ensure that it was widely understood that the plan was not exclusively dependent on external funding and would not be jettisoned in the event of such funding being decreased; the importance of developing and maintaining parity of esteem between teaching and research and facilitating synergy between the two; the difficulties that large class sizes can create in terms of implementing some teaching and learning strategies.
- 6.2** Noted that the draft plan would be discussed by the Learning Innovation Advisory Panel at its meeting of 19 February 2009 and that a revised version would subsequently be submitted to the Education Committee for further consideration.
- 6.3** The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, expressed her appreciation to Dr Fox for his presentation.

**7. HEA Student Numbers Audit: Report of Panel on Assignment of Modules to Price Groups 2007/2008**

**7.1** Ms Aisling McKenna, Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, outlined the system used for weighting modules as 1.0 (non-laboratory), 1.3 (fieldwork) or 1.7 (laboratory) and multiplying the number of weighted modules by the number of credits to arrive at figures used to inform the allocation of funding. She noted the following: where modules are newly created, a weighting is applied to them on the basis of HEA guidelines and agreed with the Faculty Managers; consideration might be given to including the information on the weighting in the information available about each module as it was developed; modules relating to therapy were a cause of concern in that the university would prefer them to be weighted at 1.7 whereas the HEA indicates a weighting of 1.3; the calculations involve a considerable number of modules which are not currently offered or are offered to small groups of students; examining module viability from the point of view of class sizes does not form part of the calculation exercise; the information about the weightings is not available on the ITS system.

**7.2** Agreed that it would be helpful for the members of the Education Committee to have a written summary of the system used to apply weightings, a list of all modules with weightings as approved and audited by HEA in March 2008, and data pertaining to the number of students registered on each module and its relative weight. Ms McKenna undertook to make this information available.

**7.3** The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, expressed her appreciation to Ms McKenna for her contribution to the meeting.

**8. Any other business**

The Chair noted that, as her term of office as Vice-President for Learning Innovation/Registrar was drawing to a close, the present meeting of the Education Committee was the last she would chair. The membership expressed its appreciation to her for her contribution both to the EC and to its predecessor committee, the Academic Strategy Committee.

**Date of next meeting:**

**Wednesday 4 February 2009, 2.00 p.m. in A204**

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

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