

**UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Thursday 3 November 2022

10.00 a.m. – 11.40 in A204

**Present:** Mr Eoin Crossen, Ms Margaret Irwin-Bannon (Secretary), Dr Pascal Landais, Dr Anna Logan, Dr Ruth McManus, Dr Jennifer McManis, Ms Phylomena McMorrow, Dr Mark O'Brien, Dr Niamh O'Sullivan, Professor Joseph Stokes and Dr Monica Ward (Chair)

**Apologies:** Professor Michael Dowling and Dr John McDonough

The Chair welcomed Dr Pascal Landais, as representative of the Associate Deans for Research, and Mark O'Brien as Head of School representative, to their first meeting of University Standards Committee. She noted that this was her first meeting as Chair in her capacity as Dean of Teaching and Learning.

**SECTION A: MINUTES RELATED ISSUES**

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda as circulated was adopted. It was noted that items 4.1.2 and 9 had been withdrawn.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of 25 August 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of 25 August 2022 were approved and signed by the Chair.

**3. Matters arising from the minutes of 25 August 2022**

3.1 It was noted that a USC sub-committee on Academic Integrity had been established, the terms of reference for which were on the agenda of this meeting (Item 3.1).

3.2 It was noted that a longer-term item relating to the recognition of credits from other institutions was part of the discussion of the RPL group (Item 3.2).

3.3 The Director of Registry noted that at its meeting of August 2022, USC had approved Duolingo as an accepted English language test for DCU entry, subject to further review. This decision was made in the context of the introduction of the test to facilitate applicants during the Covid pandemic.

She noted that Registry was preparing a paper to regularise the Duolingo English test for DCU entry for future years. It had come to light that a CAO working group had approved a Duolingo minimum overall score of 120 (deemed the equivalent of IELTS 6.5) with subset scores of 110. DCU's current requirement for postgraduate students was 110 overall. Therefore DCU's English language entry requirements for postgraduate and undergraduate applicants were not in alignment. It was noted that the postgraduate recruitment season had already begun which posed some practical difficulties.

Following discussion, it was agreed by University Standards Committee that this anomaly should not continue. It was agreed that the proposed sectoral accepted standard of an overall score of 120 with subset scores of 110 would be adopted by DCU for its postgraduate students. This would apply to all applicants for entry to DCU for September 2023.

- 3.3 It was noted that resubmission of the BSc in Physical Education with Mathematics and the BSc in Physical Education with Biology programme regulations reflecting the recommended amendment were awaited (items 5.1.1.4 and 5.1.1.5).
- 3.4 It was noted that the proposal related to the maths entry for students on the International Foundation Year programme, which was deferred at the meeting of 25 August 2022 is on the agenda of this meeting (Item 10).
- 3.5 It was noted that the following decisions were made by Chair's Action:
- 3.5.1 Approval of a legacy re-admission to the MSc in Emergency Management programme (9 September 2022).
- 3.5.2 Approval of the following programme regulations for the DCU Institute of Education (10 September 2022):
- Bachelor of Education;
  - BEd in Technology, Engineering and Graphics;
  - Professional Master of Education.
- 3.5.3 Approval of the following programme regulations for the Faculty of Engineering and Computing (10 September 2022):
- BEng/MEng Electronic and Computer Engineering;
  - BEng/MEng Mechanical and Sustainability Engineering);
  - BSc in Global Challenges;
  - Grad Cert Internet of Things;
  - Grad Cert in Data Protection (Law and Computing).
- 3.5.4 Approval of three applications for legacy re-admission to the Master's in Special Education Needs, year 2 (30 September 2022).

- 3.5.5 Approval of appointment of replacement external examiner for the MA in Refugee Integration programme (the current external examiner was appointed to a role in DCU) (20 September 2022).
- 3.5.6 Insertion into External Examiner Regulations and Guidelines (add 'leave of absence' to paragraph 2.5.4) (23 September 2022).
- 3.5.7 Permission to register for two qualifications, Grad Dip in Inclusive Education, Learning Support and Special Education and Certificate in Religious Studies (10 October 2022).
- 3.5.8 Approval of nominations for two external examiners for the BSc in Actuarial Science programme. The nominated external examiners will act as DCU external examiners and as Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA) examiners (10 October 2022).

## **SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES**

### **4. External examiners for taught programmes**

#### **4.1 Nominations**

- 4.1.1 University of Eastern Finland  
MSc in Health and Social Inclusion  
Approved
- 4.1.2 NUI Galway  
Graduate Training modules in School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education  
Approved
- 4.1.3 European Commission  
Modules in School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies  
Not approved
- 4.1.4 *Item withdrawn*
- 4.1.5 Birbeck University of London  
Modules in the School of Law and Government  
Approved

#### **4.2 Renewal of appointment/changes to duties**

There were no items for consideration.

**5. Other issues: Faculty****5.1 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences****5.1.1 Confirmation of current external examiners to serve as External Reviewers for Periodic Programme Reviews**

The following confirmation of appointments of serving external examiners to serve as reviewers on the PPR for the following programmes were noted:

- MSc in Public Policy;
- MA in Children's and Young Adult Literature;
- English Subject on the Bachelor of Arts: Joint Honours programme;
- MSc in Public Relations and Strategic Communications;
- MSc in Emerging Media.

**5.1.2 Nomination forms for the appointment of External Reviewers for Periodic Programme Reviews****5.1.2a MA in International Relations**  
Approved**5.1.2b MA in International Security and Conflict Studies**  
Approved**5.1.2c BA in Social Sciences and Cultural Innovation**  
Approved**C: Other issues (not Faculty-specific)****6. Student's Union Proposal: Paperless Assignment Policy**

The Students' Union Vice President for Academic Life introduced this proposal, which was updated on foot of feedback received from the May 2022 meeting of USC. He sought USC feedback on the revised proposal.

In the discussion that ensued the following points were noted with respect to the proposal:

- The paper proposed that any exemptions from electronic submission could be sought either through a Teaching and Learning Committee, or in consultation with student representatives. USC was concerned with the highlighting of individual academic staff members who may have specific reasons for not correcting electronic assessments and it was the view of USC that these were not appropriate decision-making mechanisms.

- It was suggested that consideration should be given to the benefit to the student of being provided with hardcopy feedback, particularly where longer pieces of work are involved.
- In some Faculties, due to the nature of the assessment, assignments have to be hand-written and therefore the burden of scanning would be placed on the student. In addition, scans are not always clear.
- It was observed during the Covid period where external examiners were examining theses that they requested hardcopies, so in cases where an assessment is lengthy, a hardcopy is needed.
- Saving assessments to a server is not without its costs and impacts on sustainability. It was recommended that there would be consultation with DCU's Sustainability Manager in this regard.
- In the context of the variation of practice amongst Faculties, it was queried how much of an issue this actually is and how many assessments are being printed.

It was noted that USC in general remained supportive of the proposal to move to increased electronic submission. It was advised that the most appropriate forum to raise and discuss the proposal would be at programme board meetings to get a sense at ground level of the issue. In addition, USC advised that the Students' Union would seek student feedback on the prevalence of hardcopy submissions.

## **7. NFQ Professional Award-type Descriptors**

The Chair noted that feedback had been received from Faculties with respect to the QQI paper on NFQ Professional Award-type descriptors and the feedback would be collated and referred to the Education Committee.

The following items were raised in the discussion that followed:

- It was felt that in general more clarity was needed on professional-award types. It was noted that there was general concern on the use of the word 'professional' in awards as used by private providers and in the context of the recent approval in Marks and Standards of a 10-credit professional certificate.
- It was felt that further clarity was needed on 'dualling', as outlined in the paper.
- It was suggested that it would be preferable to include level 10 professional programmes within this document rather than treating them as a separate exercise.

It was noted that feedback received to date would be collated and referred to the Education Committee.

## 8. Maths Requirements for International Foundation Year (IFY) Progression to Destination Programmes

The Director of Registry provided the context for the proposal as circulated. For students who are on the IFY programme and where their destination DCU programme is a non-STEM programme, they have been struggling to get the required grade in the A-level maths on offer through the IFY programme. This level of maths would not be required of non-international students for these programmes. As the proposal to offer an alternative 'ordinary maths' syllabus was not received on time to give it due consideration at the USC meeting of 25 August 2023, discussions on a way forward were progressed between Registry, the Registrar and programme chairs.

The paper as circulated proposed a pilot for entry to specific destination programmes for 2023-2024 as follows:

- BSc in Aviation Management
- Bachelor of Business Studies
- BA in Accounting and Finance
- BA in International Relations
- BA in Journalism
- BSc in Multimedia
- Bachelor of Civil Law
- BSc in Nursing (General)

The following was proposed: *'These students will be assessed as part of the application process to determine if their Maths achievement is at least equivalent to the entry requirements of the destination programme. If they are deemed to have equivalent Maths, they will receive an exemption and not be required to take Maths as part of the IFY.'*

*The exit criteria for these students will be to successfully complete the IFY programme with an English for Academic Purposes grade B (depending on progression programme) AND B+B in two modules and "Exemption" in Mathematics.'*

*If they do **not** meet the equivalent Maths requirement as part of their application, they **must** take the NCUK Mathematics and achieve the exit criteria of English for Academic Purposes grade B (depending on progression programme) AND B+B+C in three modules.'*

It was agreed that the proposal would be approved for one year and that the Deputy Registrar would review its operation and revert to USC for entry 23-24 into the International Foundation Year.

## 9. Proposal on English language entry requirements and tests; the Oxford test of English and Duolingo English test

This item was deferred—See discussion under item 3.3.

**10. Faculty Periodic Programme Review: Activity undertaken in 2021-2022 and planned for 2022-2023 (for noting)**

Noted

**11. Programme Regulations Template 2023-2024**

It was noted that there is no change to the programme regulation template for 2023-2024. The Secretary indicated that she would circulate the template and guide to Faculties for the next round of Programme Board meetings.

**12. Draft Terms of Reference for the sub-committee on Academic Integrity**

The Terms of Reference were approved subject to the following proposed amendments:

- Inclusion of Registry in the membership due to the relationship between academic integrity and examination regulations;
- A change to the quorum from 33% to 50%;
- Clarification on Phase II of the project.

**13. Any other business**

There were no items of business.

**Date of next meeting:**

Thursday, 12 January 2023  
10.00 a.m.  
A204

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

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