

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

---

**MINUTES**

Wednesday 13 April 2022

2.00 p.m. – 3.45 p.m. via Zoom

**Present:** Dr Sarahjane Belton, Ms Annabella Stover, Professor Mark Brown, Ms Jennifer Bruton, Professor Michelle Butler, Professor Derek Hand, Dr Rachel Keegan (Secretary), Mr Billy Kelly, Dr Anna Logan, Professor Anne Looney, Professor Lisa Looney (Chair), Ms Aisling McKenna, Ms Pauline Mooney, Professor Colm O’Gorman and Dr Blánaid White

**Apologies:** Ms Kate Goodman, Professor Greg Hughes and Professor Joseph Stokes

**In attendance:** Dr Jing Burgi-Tian and Ms Valerie Cooke

The Chair welcomed Ms Annabella Stover to her first meeting of the Education Committee.

**SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING****1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of Education Committee, 9 March 2022**

The minutes of 9 March 2022 were approved.

**3. Matters arising from the minutes of 9 March 2022**

- 3.1 It was noted that a draft paper on blended delivery in undergraduate programmes is on the agenda of today’s meeting (item 6).
- 3.2 It was noted that the feedback provided by the Education Committee in relation to the proposed MSc in Strategic Learning and Development has been addressed (item 10).
- 3.3 It was noted that work on the development of employability statement templates is ongoing (item 3.1).
- 3.4 It was noted that work on a policy paper on collaborative provision and joint, double and multiple awards will be progressed in the coming months (item 3.5).

- 3.5 It was noted that work on the provision of an overview of OVPAA and Education Committee strategic commitments and activities is ongoing (item 3.7).
- 3.6 It was noted that feedback provided by the Education Committee in relation to the proposed Business Analytics specialism on the existing Bachelor of Business Studies will be addressed in advance of the next meeting (item 9).
- 3.7 It was noted that the provision of a revised financial statement for the proposed MSc in Strategic Learning and Development is ongoing (item 10).
- 3.8 It was noted that the provision of a revised financial statement for the proposed Graduate Certificate in Financial Intelligence and Technology is ongoing (item 3.10).

## **SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS**

### **4. Strategic Academic Initiatives**

#### **4.1 Minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Learning Innovation Project Steering Group of 7 February 2022**

The minutes were approved.

The Director of Strategic Learning Innovation drew attention to the forthcoming visit to DCU by the educational innovator, Professor Dave Goldberg. She encouraged members to promote the workshops which would take place from 25 - 29 April.

### **5. A future model for technology-enhanced undergraduate delivery**

The Chair summarised the draft paper which was developed on foot of learnings from DCU Futures programmes and following discussions at the previous meeting of the Education Committee. She recorded her thanks to the Director of Strategic Learning Innovation and the Deputy Registrar/Dean for Teaching and Learning for their input into the draft document. The Chair drew attention to the following key points:

- The paper is intended to provide guidance to Faculties in planning for the next academic year, with an emphasis on the use of technology to enhance learning rather than to substitute in-person activities.
- The paper recognises that colleagues have very different skill sets from two years ago and are anxious to apply these in the delivery of their programmes. However, the clear position of the University is that DCU is a predominately campus-based institution, particularly in relation to our undergraduate portfolio. As such, decisions should be made with a view to optimising the undergraduate student experience.
- The paper is not an attempt to address external pressures on campus attendance such as accommodation shortages and the rising cost of commuting.
- It is proposed that the Programme Chairperson is best placed to maintain oversight of the student learning experience across a programme as a whole.
- It is proposed that the DCU Futures approach be adopted that will allow for innovation balanced with ensuring campus experience - up to one-sixth of a programme to be

delivered online (achieved by one module in six being fully online, or two modules, where the traditional on-campus footprint is reduced by 50% in each).

The paper was considered by members and the following comments and suggested amendments were noted:

- The paper was welcomed by members as a useful tool for Heads of Schools and Programme Chairpersons in having conversations about what is and is not feasible for delivery in 2022-23. It was noted that the paper is not intended to launch a major revision of practice, but rather should be used as a guidance document in ensuring that programmes are being delivered within agreed parameters.
- It was suggested that the inclusion of some additional context would be helpful, to make clear that this is an interim approach rather than a future model. Current economic and political uncertainties were acknowledged along with the need to be responsive to the focus and direction of the next DCU Strategic Plan. It was suggested that 'future-focus' should be replaced in the title.
- Some limitations in the 'reach' of the paper were also noted, including the fact that planning for 2022-23 is already at an advanced stage and that current systems do not capture the mode of delivery, making it difficult to identify what is being planned at a module level. It was also noted that there is no mechanism to systematically track adherence to the principle of a maximum of one-sixth online.
- It was noted that the operating assumption of the paper is that undergraduate programmes are predominantly fully on-campus. It was agreed that this should be made explicit in the document.
- It was noted that it would be useful if the 'baseline' for changes could be made more explicit in the document. It was recognised that fully on-campus programmes already contained elements of blending pre-pandemic (i.e. the use of Loop for the distribution of reading materials, assessment etc.).
- It was suggested that the document be updated to describe blended delivery using ENQA terminology which defines blending as anything that incorporates technology to enhance the learning of predominantly on-campus students. It was noted that this draft document is about a stronger commitment to blended learning beyond baseline practices and it was suggested that it would be useful to include some language around the layers of blending.
- It was noted that the title makes reference to 'technology-enhanced' learning. It was suggested that this should be amended to reflect ENQA and DCU-agreed terminology. It was noted, however, that the focus on technology enhancement rather than substitution should not be lost as the underpinning principle in this document.
- It was noted that the document does not currently address instances where a lecturer may decide to deliver some components of a module online but under the 50% threshold.
- The current tensions between student expectations and DCU's position as an on-campus University were acknowledged. It was recognised that there is a body of work to be undertaken across the sector in recalibrating student expectations.

The Chair thanked members for their considered feedback on the draft document. It was agreed that the discussed amendments and additions would be incorporated into the document and circulated to members for final input. It was agreed that, given that planning for 2022-23 is already well underway, the document would be finalised electronically so that it may be circulated to Faculties in advance of the next meeting of the Education Committee.

## 6. IUA updates for 2021-22

The Chair and the Director of Quality Promotion and Institutional Research provided members with an update on key IUA activities in 2021-22. The Dean of Graduate Studies was unable to attend the meeting but provided the Chair with an update for the Deans of Graduate Studies Group. The key points were noted as follows:

### IUA Quality Officers Group:

- In 2021 the Quality Officers Group coordinated significant feedback from institutions on the QQI thematic review on programme approval processes within the Designated Awarding Bodies sector.
- The Quality Officers Group were also heavily involved in the consultation process for the new Joint-Sectoral Protocol between Designated Awarding Bodies and QQI for the Inclusion of Qualifications within the NFAQ.
- The Quality Officers Group provided input into how statutory returns to the Irish Register of Qualifications can be managed in a way which ensures compliance while limiting the regulatory burden for institutions. Ms McKenna noted that DCU completed an initial return last year and is working towards a November deadline for the provision of a revised return. She noted that the Quality Officers Group is looking at how existing mechanisms can be used for reporting across a range of quality assurance requirements rather than creating new procedures and mechanisms for each requirement.
- Looking forward, the work of the Quality Officers Group will focus on QQI plans to develop a robust framework for ensuring compliance for an international educational mark. Ms McKenna noted the importance of using existing mechanisms to support this. The Chair noted that the Registrars Group also fed back to QQI about the need to use existing quality structures rather than establishing separate systems for the purpose of an international quality mark.

### IUA Registrars Group

- The sector's response to the ongoing pandemic was a prominent focus of the Registrars Group in the earlier months of the year, with a particular focus on the return to campus.
- A sector-wide approach to the growing student numbers has also been a key topic for the Registrars Group this year. The Chair highlighted the need for more longer-term planning, informing members that discussions continue at the IUA level. She noted that they are still awaiting a response from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science regarding the 2022-23 intake.
- Funding was again a key topic for the IUA this year. The Chair noted that a new policy approach to funding that was expected in recent weeks has not yet been published. It is hoped that this will be circulated by the end of April.
- The Registrars Group continues to be briefed on the IUA-led HCI Microcred and RPL projects.
- The Chair drew attention to the significant work of the National Academic Integrity Network under Mr Billy Kelly's leadership and signalled to members that QQI has recently indicated a move towards regulation and specific statutory guidelines around academic integrity regulation. She noted that she expects academic integrity will be a key priority over the next couple of years.
- In recent weeks the Registrars Group has considered how best to support Ukrainian student refugees seeking to continue with their studies in Ireland.

- The Registrars Group is also looking at changes to the HEAR application process with a view to making the system more automated and transparent. The Chair acknowledged that there are significant complexities in this piece of work.

#### IUA Deans of Graduate Studies Group:

- Earlier in the year, funding for researchers impacted by Covid was a key focus of the Deans of Graduate Studies Group.
- The payment of postgraduate research students for learning support activities is a current issue being considered. The Chair advised members that DCU currently has a framework for payments but this may need to be updated once a sector-wide position is agreed upon for 2022-23.
- The Deans of Graduate Studies Group is also working on a research careers profiling project for those considering a research degree. The resource is intended to give potential applicants a better sense of what it is like to be a research student, possible career paths etc.
- The Ukrainian crisis is a key consideration at present and the Deans of Graduate Studies Group is exploring how best to support postgraduate research students to continue with their studies.

## **SECTION C: PROGRAMME AND MODULE-SPECIFIC ISSUES**

### **7. Faculty of Engineering and Computing and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: proposal for a Graduate Certificate in Data Protection: Law and Computing**

The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Computing summarised the proposal for the new Graduate Certificate which has a significant overlap in credits with the existing MA in Data Protection (Law and Computing). She noted that the development of this award had been driven by an identified need of the Irish Computer Society (ICS) for upskilling opportunities for its members. She noted that the ICS will provide a pipeline of applicants for this programme.

The Graduate Certificate in Data Protection: Law and Computing was approved subject to the following items being addressed:

- It was noted that an underpinning MOU, which addresses matters relating to intellectual property, alignment of quality assurance procedures, financial considerations etc., is in preparation. This should be called out explicitly in the proposal.
- It was noted that the entry requirements for the programme need to be revisited:
  - It was noted that the ICS certified Data Protection Practitioner qualification alone is not sufficient for entry onto a level 9 award.
  - It was recommended that the proposal should make explicit reference to DCU's policy and associated procedures for recognition of prior learning. It was noted that the ICS certified Data Protection Practitioner qualification may be considered under this mechanism as part of an applicant's RPL portfolio.
  - It was recommended that the entry requirements be aligned to those of the MA programme.
- It was noted that the reference to 'derogations' should be corrected to 'exemptions'.
- It was noted that the proposal makes reference to the 'final course board'. This should be corrected to reference the Progression and Awards Board.

- It was noted that it is intended that this programme be delivered fully on-campus and this should be made explicit in the proposal.

## **8. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and DCU Institute of Education: proposal for an education policy pathway on the MSc in Public Policy**

The Executive Dean of the DCU Institute of Education summarised the proposal to create a new education policy pathway on the existing MSc in Public Policy. She noted that the pathway was developed on foot of discussions with the Department of Education, where the need for an education policy programme for school inspectors and other senior civil servants was identified.

The education policy pathway on the MSc in Public Policy was approved subject to the following items being addressed:

- It was noted that the proposal makes reference to the title MSc in Public Policy (Education Policy). However, it was confirmed by the Executive Dean that the intention is for students to exit with the same award as other students on the programme. On that basis, it was noted that the proposal should be updated to reflect the award title of MSc in Public Policy.
- It was noted that it is intended that the programme will be delivered fully online on a part-time basis, and this should be made explicit in the proposal, and be subject to a separate proposal approval for online delivery.
- It was noted that a structure has been created on Course Builder for this proposal but that no structure exists for the existing MSc. It was requested that a single structure for the programme in its entirety is created in Course Builder.
- It was noted that further attention should be paid to the research elements in this programme:
  - It was noted that there appears to be a significant focus on research design and methods (25 of 90 ECTS) and it was recommended that further clarity be provided on the focus of the three research methods modules.
  - It was noted that it is unclear what is contained in LG5025A (Quantitative Methods for Social Sciences) or LG5065A (Research Design for Policy Makers) as there are no descriptors in Course Builder. It was requested that full module descriptors be created in Course Builder.
  - It was noted that the title of the new Qualitative Research Methods for Social Sciences module should be revisited to emphasise its focus on the use of research in a professional setting.
  - It was noted that the MSc in Public Policy was initially accredited as a full-time on-campus and part-time blended programme. As this programme is now being delivered fully online, it was requested that the programme be brought back to the May meeting of the Education Committee for formal approval of the change in delivery mode.

## **9. Any other business**

- 9.1 The Director of Quality Promotion and Institutional Research informed members that Dr Burgi-Tian had prepared a report on trends in undergraduate student withdrawals. She noted that there has been an increase in the number of withdrawals in the current year and that, for the first time, wanting to transfer to another university was the number one reason

given. It was noted that this is linked particularly to Leaving Certificate students with over 500 points, not on their first preference.

- 9.2 The Chair noted that this was the Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning's last meeting and she thanked him on behalf of members for his noteworthy contributions to the Education Committee. She noted that Mr Kelly has been a member of the Education Committee since 2010 and she expressed her gratitude to him for his significant and ongoing engagement. She noted his forensic attention to proposals, his unwavering focus on academic standards and the student experience and his support and guidance which he gives most feely to ensure the best possible outcomes for staff and students.

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

**Date of next meeting:**  
Wednesday, 11 May 2022  
at 2.00 pm via Zoom