

UNIVERSITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday 6 January 2022

9.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m. via Zoom

Present: Dr Brad Anderson, Professor Michael Dowling, Ms Liza Gieroń, Ms Kate Goodman, Ms Margaret Irwin-Bannon (Secretary), Mr Billy Kelly (Chair), Dr Anna Logan, Dr Ruth McManus, Dr Jennifer McManis, Ms Phylomena McMorrow and Dr Niamh O’Sullivan

Apologies: Dr Lorraine Delaney and Prof Joseph Stokes

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Professor Michael Dowling to University Standards Committee as recently appointed Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning in DCU Business School.

SECTION A: MINUTES RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda as circulated was adopted.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 18 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting of 18 November 2021 were approved.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of 18 November 2021

3.1 It was noted that a process had been established for students on the BA in Applied Language and Translation Studies (ALTS) and Bachelor of Business Studies – International (INTB) programmes to return to their respective programmes to complete an international placement. This arrangement was made in the context of travel restrictions. It was clarified that the need for advance registration applied only to the Japanese and Chinese students for visa purposes and was therefore not as complex to operationalise as originally anticipated (Item 3.1).

3.2 It was noted that a proposed approach to DCU’s Academic Integrity Policy in the context of the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms and Academic Integrity Guidelines is on the agenda of this meeting (Item 6).

- 3.3 It was noted that a revised nomination submission for an external examiner for the BSc in Computer Science/BSc in Computer Applications, which had been considered at the meeting of 18 November 2022 was awaited (Item 4.1.5).
- 3.4 It was noted that the nomination for an external examiner for modules in the School of Law and Government was resubmitted and is on the agenda of this meeting (Item 4.1.3).
- 3.5 It was noted that the nomination for an external examiner for the Graduate Certificate in Sexuality Education and Sexual Wellbeing was resubmitted and is on the agenda of this meeting (Item 4.1.9).
- 3.6 It was noted that an exemption request for a student on the MSc in Management (Business) was submitted and is on the agenda of this meeting (Item 5.5.2).
- 3.7 It was noted that a proposal for a revised wording related to the carry forward of modules in Marks and Standards is on the agenda of this meeting (Item 7).
- 3.8 It was noted that following submission of additional information, the nomination of an external examiner for the School of Human Development was deemed approved (Item 4.1.2).
- 3.9 It was noted, following clarification of the proposed external examiner's workload, that the nomination (School of Mechanical Engineering) was deemed approved (Item 4.1.6).
- 3.10 It was noted, following clarification of the nominated external examiner's workload, that the change to duties (BEng/MEng in Mechatronics) was deemed approved (Item 4.2.3).
- 3.11 It was noted, following clarification of the nominated external examiner's workload that the change to duties (BEng/MEng in Mechatronics) was deemed approved (Item 4.2.4).
- 3.12 It was noted that an exemption request for a student returning to the MSc in Investment, Treasury and Banking programme, and considered at the USC meeting of 18 November 2021, was approved by Chair's Action (15 December 2021) following the submission of additional information (Item 5.5.1).
- 3.13 It was noted that the Secretary had amended the template and guidelines for Programme Regulations and circulated them to Faculties for preparation for the 2022-2023 academic year.
- 3.14 It was noted that an additional set of modules was added to the PPR external reviewer workload in the School of Law and Government. The appointment was originally noted by USC on 18 November 2021.

SECTION B: FACULTY ISSUES

B. Faculty issues

4 External examiners for taught programmes

4.1 Nominations

- 4.1.1 Universiti Putra Malaysia
BSc in Climate and Environmental Sustainability
Approved
- 4.1.2 Cardiff University
MSc in Public Relations and Strategic Communications
Withdrawn. It was agreed that a new nomination would be considered by Chair's Action.
- 4.1.3 University of London
BSc in Multimedia, MSc in Emerging Media
Approved
- 4.1.4 University of Limerick
Modules in the School of Law and Government
Approved
- 4.1.5 University of London
BA in Journalism, MA in Journalism
Approved
- 4.1.6 University College Cork
Module in the School of Nursing, Psychotherapy & Community Health
Approved
- 4.1.7 University of Limerick
Graduate Certificate in Sexuality Education and Sexual Wellbeing, Graduate Certificate in Relationships and Sexuality for People with Intellectual Disability
Approved, it was noted that this external examiner completed a four-year term in 2016.

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 Nomination of Periodic Programme Reviewer: MA in Journalism
Approved

5.1.2 Confirmation of Periodic Programme Reviewers in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Noted

5.2 DCU Institute of Education

5.2.1 Nomination of Periodic Programme Reviewer: MSc in Guidance Counselling
Noted

5.2.2 Legacy readmission request: Professional Certificate / Diploma in Special and Inclusive Education
Approved

5.3 DCU Business School

5.3.1 Module Exemption request: MSc in Business Management

Following detailed discussion, it was agreed that the student would be required to complete the module: MT5000, Data Analytics and Visualisation in addition to the dissertation module MG574. The remaining exemptions as requested, were granted.

5.4 Faculty of Science and Health

5.4.1 Confirmation of Periodic Programme Reviewers in the Faculty of Science and Health
Noted

5.4.2 Nomination of Periodic Programme Reviewer: BSc in Actuarial Mathematics
Noted

5.4.3 Request for registration onto Stand-alone Module BE102
Approved

C: Other issues (not Faculty-specific)

6. Proposed change to Marks and Standards

The Chair noted that at its 18 November 2021 meeting, USC had agreed where relevant, individual programme regulations would be made clearer with respect to the carry-forward of failed or deferred modules. It had also been agreed that Marks and Standards would be

amended to include a clearer reference to the carry-forward of modules. The following wording for entry into Marks and Standards was proposed:

7.2.1.5: Where programme regulations for a programme permit, failed or deferred module(s) may be carried forward to the following year, subject to the criteria detailed in the programme regulations, and aligned with regulations pertaining to academic session and ECTS credits (M&S: paragraph 2.2.5).

Followed by existing wording amended as follows:

*7.2.1.5 6Where a Progression and Award Board has permitted a student to progress into the next year carrying a failed module(s) (as ~~outlined~~ **detailed** in the Programme Regulations), the failed module (s) can only be carried for one academic year.*

The proposed changes as outlined above were agreed.

7. Towards an Institution-wide Approach to Academic Integrity

The Chair summarised the content of the circulated document which outlined the proposed approach to tackling the emergence of commercial cheating services. He briefed the Committee on the work of the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) to date and the context in which the proposal was made.

He drew the attention of the Committee to the proposed draft plan of action for DCU and noted that the key to the approach would be ‘an emphasis on positive behaviours on the part of learners rather than focusing on potential misconduct’.

He outlined the key actions as follows:

1. Learner education;
2. Learner obligations explicitly articulated;
3. Academic misconduct policies;
4. Staff education and training;
5. Teaching and learning approaches;
6. Assessment practices;
7. Assessment design;
8. Targeted supports for vulnerable learners.

The Chair noted that his purpose for providing the paper as circulated was to raise awareness of the issues and to propose the establishment of a sub-group to consider how to address these areas, and to develop an implementation plan. He noted that the approach would be about informing the culture in which students work, and the emphasis would be on education and awareness rather than misconduct.

In the discussion which followed the following points were noted:

- It was suggested that the action plan also takes cognisance of research students (proof-reading and rephrasing services also impact on research students). It was agreed that although the impact is predominately in the taught arena that consideration would be given to research student impact;
- Students are primarily and specifically targeted through social media platforms;
- It was suggested that students consider the contract cheating services/essay mills when they are uncertain about what they need to do for assessments and further guidelines and resources would be very helpful;
- The view was expressed that this was a more holist approach and is more likely to get buy-in from all concerned, and was welcomed;
- Some Schools reported increases in breaches of academic integrity this year, which reinforced the view of the pressures students are under in terms of management of an increased level of continuous assessment;
- It was suggested that consideration would be given to a behavioural approach to plagiarism. At the moment the plagiarism form is quite passive, in that the text is provided to students and it was suggested that it is switched to be more active, whereby students have to write for themselves how an assessment submission their own work;
- It will be a challenge to change the culture unless the culture is also changed at second level;
- The following issues were noted as items of ongoing concern:
 - That the current policy does not address students assisting other students. This information is on Loop but is not within the current policy;
 - Students sharing login details;
 - File sharing sites (assignment exchange).

The Chair indicated that he would establish a sub-group comprising the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning and the Students' Union representative. He would also seek input from the research area. It was hoped that a plan of work would be developed and that resources and an updated policy would be in place for the next academic year.

8. Any other business

Clarification was sought on the conduct of Progression and Award Boards and the continuation of the arrangements made as a response to remote learning and working. It was noted that the Deputy Dean of Teaching and Learning/Deputy Registrar would convene a meeting with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning to finalise future arrangements and to discuss, in particular, attendance by external examiners at Progression and Award Boards in the future.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Date of next meeting:

Thursday, 3 March 2022

9.30 a.m. via Zoom