

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Wednesday, 13 December 2023

2.00 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.

Drumcondra Board Room

All Hallows Campus

**Present:** Dr Claire Bohan, Dr Jennifer Bruton, Mr Eoin Crossen, Professor Dominic Elliott, Professor Derek Hand, Dr Charlotte Holland, Margaret Irwin-Bannon (Secretary), Dr Rachel Keegan, Professor Lisa Looney (Chair), Ms Pauline Mooney, Professor Joseph Stokes, Dr Monica Ward, Professor Blánaid White and Dr Paul Young

**Apologies:** Professor Mark Brown, Professor John Doyle and Dr Jennifer McManis

**In attendance** Dr Jing Burgi-Tian

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

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee of 15 November 2023**

The minutes of the meeting of 15 November 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair.

### **3. Matters arising from the minutes of 15 November 2023**

- 3.1 It was noted that the updated validation forms and accreditation template will be finalised in quarter 1 of 2024 to include elements related to aspects of teaching and learning strategic priorities (Item 4.3).
- 3.2 It was noted that a white paper on a university-wide review of programmes in the context of GenAI is on the agenda of this meeting (Item 5.2).
- 3.3 It was noted that an update to the DCU Institute of Education planned PPRs had been made. It was noted that the implication of the amendments meant that no PPRs would take place in 2023-2024. The Chair requested some further clarification on 2023-2024 plans (Item 11).

## **SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS**

### **4. Strategic academic initiatives**

#### 4.1 Generative Artificial Intelligence: University Response

##### 4.1.1 *White paper on Curriculum Renewal in the context of Artificial Intelligence (Draft)*

The Chair introduced this item noting that the paper was in draft format and would be maintained as a 'work in progress' document. The paper was being presented to Education Committee in its current iteration to seek input with respect to the proposed timeframe and the general direction of travel in this regard.

The Dean of Teaching and Learning briefed Education Committee on the context and background provided in the paper highlighting the EU Artificial Intelligence Act which is currently being drafted and which will regulate the use of AI. She noted within the different rules categorised within the draft AI Act, that Education is 'high risk', and particular focus was on access to education and assessment. She noted it was likely that there would be an oversight/monitoring system similar to that required for GDPR to control AI and its use.

Following the initial consideration of the context of AI, the Chair invited feedback from Education members noting that the document as circulated will be continuously updated as AI develops at an anticipated fast pace. The following was noted from the discussion which followed:

- AI presents very significant challenges and opportunities for the University.
- An inequity already exists between those students with the means to purchase the more advanced levels of GenAI programmes and those who cannot. This consideration will have very direct implications for the University in terms of designing-in AI and any potential future role in providing AI Engines and tools.
- It was clarified that Section 5 of the document would contain more generic sectoral reports (IBEC, PwC etc.) on AI impact and what is required within the Faculty 'disciplines' would be to look at the expected impact on roles which graduates from each discipline typically pursue, citing the most relevant sources. It was agreed that the wording of the second bullet under item 7 would be '*An insight into the expected impact on roles which graduates from each discipline typically pursue, citing the specific sources which helped form a view on this*'.
- It was noted that Section 7 should have the heading 'Approach'.
- It was noted that the Careers Service would have a key role on an institutional level to assess what employers want from our future graduates. In addition, the INTRA team will have a key role, as the function of the 'intern' is becoming vulnerable due to AI.

The Chair noted that the paper intentionally focused on 'disciplines' rather than programmes to provide Faculties flexibility in how AI would be considered, and it was a decision for the Faculties on how they wanted to group programmes. She noted too that her intention in asking the Dean of Teaching and Learning to bring this to Education Committee was to make sure that there is no part of the university that is not engaging with the questions AI raises. In addition, she noted that the role of Education Committee would be to maintain institutional oversight of the evolution of our responses over the next few years. One of the Chair's goals was to be a position for DCU to assure future entrants at Open Day in November 2024 that DCU was engaging with AI and anticipating its impact on graduate requirements.

The Dean of Teaching and Learning provided a briefing on Section 8 and 9 of the white paper which outlined the implementation of the proposed approach and timeframe. This element was discussed, and the following items were noted:

- The scope and depth of the proposed review was explored with respect to the level of granularity that would be expected of Faculties. It was clarified that what was being sought was the 'nature' of the change that would need to take place in the context of AI and the specific discipline. The objective was to avoid a 'wait and see' approach.
- There was consensus that there would need to be more time given to these considerations, particularly where it might involve retirement of programmes /pathways etc. It was agreed that structure changes could not be ready for the February/March programme boards.
- It was asked if another question could be included which would reflect the scale of the response at Faculty level and if time could be given to reflect on the awareness of and expertise on AI within the Faculties.
- It was recommended that consideration would be given to the impact of potential changes on professional accreditation.
- It was suggested that it would be beneficial, given the pace of change, to seek guidance from professionals in the AI field who are 'future scanning' and ahead of the curve in this regard.
- It would be beneficial if Education Committee members had a baseline knowledge in this area.

It was agreed, based on discussions reflected above, that bullet three in table one, under the heading of 'purpose,' 'seek approval/modify major programme structures' would be deleted and the timeframe for the review would be during semester 2 and into the early part of summer 2024.

Rather than establishing an AI working group, there was consensus that AI would continue at the forefront of the Education Committee's agenda, as it is fundamental to its role as an oversight committee.

The Chair noted that the Institutional Risk Register had recently been updated and approved by Governing Authority and AI is one of the new listed risks in terms of how it may impact the following:

1. our teaching and learning portfolio
2. how the University works
3. the skills sets and capabilities of University staff

It was noted that the use of tailored AI packages for staff, and for providing efficiencies, should be considered. This would raise the issues of confidentiality and data sharing etc. but would be useful to explore in other fora.

The Chair concluded the discussion noting that further work would be completed on the draft document over the coming days and that edits suggested would be completed. It was agreed that the Dean of Teaching and Learning would communicate the plan to the Teaching Enhancement Unit and that the Deans would discuss with the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning for roll-out after the Christmas holiday.

#### 4.2 Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) Working Group

##### 4.2.1 *Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) Working Group Update*

Professor Dominic Elliott, in his capacity as Chair of the Student Feedback on Teaching Working Group, provided an update on the work of the Group to date. He noted that due to his unavoidable absence during the working group term, the momentum which had been gathered had slowed and this was the reason for seeking an extension of the term of the working group. He indicated that the intention was to circulate an outline proposal to expert colleagues within the University with a view to a final proposal being considered by the Working Group in January 2024. It would then be submitted for consideration to Education Committee for its meeting of 21 February 2024.

Professor Elliott clarified that once the final model is agreed, the implementation from a technical point of view, and the broader issue of supporting culture would have to be considered.

The Chair noted that from an institutional point of view, it would require sufficient time to pilot and embed new practice well in advance of the next round of institutional review.

##### 4.2.2 *Proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference for the SFT Working Group*

It was proposed that there would be an update to the Terms of Reference for the SFT Working Group as follows:

- To extend the term of the Working Group to the end of February 2024 (previous deadline was the end of December 2023).

The update to the Terms of Reference was approved. It was further agreed that a minor amendment would be made to the membership listing within the Terms of Reference from 'Member of staff from Student Advice and Learning Skills Centre, Student Support and Development' to Member of Staff from Student Support and Development'.

### **4.3 DCU Futures**

#### *4.3.1 DCU Futures Evaluation (staff and student flyer)*

The Chair welcomed Professor Blanaid White in her new capacity as Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science and Health and noted that the following update related to her recent role as Dean of Strategic Learning Innovation.

Professor Blanaid White presented on DCU Futures Evaluation outcomes flyers which will be published for staff and students over the coming weeks. She wanted to provide Education Committee with a preview of the two documents before they were circulated more broadly.

She noted that the survey was conducted independent of the DCU Futures team by the DCU Institute of Education based Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection (EQI) and was led out by Dr Emer Eivers. She outlined that the evaluation project criteria were to examine the overall Futures model for efficacy, impact, sustainability and scalability. The students survey included non-futures students, students who were on designated futures programmes and those who came into Common Entry programmes and chose a Futures specialism in a subsequent year. She noted that the objective of the evaluation was to ensure that a rolling iterative review process took place. The programme teams would then respond and amend as the programmes progressed. She noted the interesting gender disparities related both to consideration of dropping out of a programme, and group work. The absence of mature students was also notable.

The Chair commended the work completed on the survey and noted that it provided opportunity for adaptation and to address issues as they arose. She also commended the style and tone of the student flyer.

The Students' Union representative noted that the 'what's next' section showed that students were being listened to and the loop was being closed off following receipt of feedback.

It was noted that the flyers would be circulated as soon as they were formally designed, and the circulation listing would be finalised.

It was noted that the next planned evaluation would involve a staff survey which will be circulated to both Futures and non-Futures colleagues.

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

There were no items for consideration.

## **SECTION D: OTHER MATTERS**

### **5 Any other business**

#### **5.1 *HEA Mission-based Performance Compact***

The Chair provided a briefing on the initial HEA Compact meeting which had taken place on 12 December 2023. She indicated that the HEA has introduced a new framework and that DCU was asked to provide four headline objectives in response to the new framework pillars as follows:

- Teaching and Learning
- Research
- Access and Participation
- Engagement

From a Teaching and Learning Strategy point of view, the Chair noted that the focus of the Compact is the transversal skills element of DCU Futures, embedding them into our undergraduate programmes and providing a transversal skills transcript which will enable students to evidence those skills to employers.

Regarding the Access and Participation element, she noted that DCU had highlighted the ambition to have 10% of students from Further Education (FE) on its eligible programmes.

The HEA queried DCU's data collection with respect to students with disability and it was indicated that this reporting would improve once our new student system was in place for registration. With respect to access the conversation was about nuancing student support. The delivery of the 'Care and Connect' programme was also referenced.

The Chair noted that she thought it was a positive meeting and that anything that had been discussed was aligned with the DCU Strategic plan. She noted that the University would receive feedback in writing and would be able to respond after Christmas, with a view to agreeing a new Compact in February 2024.

The Chair wished colleagues a happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.

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

**Date of next meeting:**

Wednesday, 24 January 2024  
at 2.00 pm  
Zoom