

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Wednesday, 24 January 2024

2.00 p.m. – 3.45 p.m.

Zoom

Present: Professor Derek Hand, Professor Charlotte Holland, Margaret Irwin-Bannon (Secretary), Dr Rachel Keegan, Professor Lisa Looney (Chair), Dr Jennifer McManis, Ms Pauline Mooney, Professor Joseph Stokes, Dr Monica Ward, Professor Blánaid White and Dr Paul Young

Apologies: Dr Claire Bohan, Professor Mark Brown, Dr Jennifer Bruton, Mr Eoin Crossen and Professor Dominic Elliott

In attendance Dr Jing Burgi-Tian

SECTION A: AGENDA, MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted. It was noted that there were two items of AOB.

2. Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee of 13 December 2023

The minutes of the meeting of 13 December 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 requested clarification of the DCU Institute of Education planned PPRs had been provided (Item 3.3).
- 3.2 It was noted that the updated validation forms and accreditation template will be finalised in quarter one of 2024 to include elements related to aspects of teaching and learning strategic priorities (Item 3.1).
- 3.3 The Chair provided a general update on the progress made on the *White paper on Curriculum Renewal in the context of Artificial Intelligence*. She indicated that since the meeting of 13 December 2023 the Dean of Teaching and Learning had updated the paper in line with the feedback provided and added content on context and external perspectives on Artificial Intelligence. It was intended that the paper, once finalised, would provide the starting point for Faculties for the review of curriculum. The Dean of Teaching and Learning noted the fast rate at which latest information is available, and the broad and deep impact on all sectors. She re-iterated the importance of Faculties reviewing their curricula in this context.

The Chair summarised the actions to be taken with respect to developments in Artificial Intelligence as follows:

- To provide a briefing on the capabilities of Artificial Intelligence and impact for colleagues on Senior Management;
- To request that the topic would be on the Academic Council agenda, in order to broaden awareness across the academic community and to highlight the pace of change.
- To establish a baseline of knowledge on Artificial Intelligence from across the University.

It was agreed following discussion that a single university-wide survey would be the preferred approach to establish baseline knowledge. It was noted that the white paper would be amended to reflect the decision to conduct a university-wide survey. It was indicated that the survey would focus on technical knowledge and staff views of, and attitudes toward, AI.

It was noted in the ensuing discussion that the theme of the Quality Improvement and Development (QuID) Funding call for 2024 was AI related and that there had been a greater than expected submission of proposals, many focused on capacity building and awareness of how it might be deployed in the university (Item 4.1)

- 3.4 It was noted that the Student Feedback Working Group proposal is due for consideration at 21 February 2024 meeting (Item 4.2.1).

SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS

4. Strategic academic initiatives

4.1 *Report on Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) funding and activities*

The Chair introduced this item providing context to the paper as circulated. DCU has traditionally attracted funding from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, and this funding contributed to a substantial proportion of the work undertaken by the Teaching Enhancement Unit (TEU). She noted that the National Forum has now come under the auspices of the Higher Education Authority. It has also now committed to providing multi-annual, as opposed to annual, funding.

The Dean of Teaching and Learning noted that the report as circulated was intended to give oversight to Education Committee on the totality of commitments under SATLE funding. It outlined how the funding has been allocated to date under the specific SATLE initiatives. It also outlined a proposal for the disbursement of the remaining 2023 funds to Faculty-led actions which support SATLE themes. The Dean of Teaching and Learning drew the attention of Education Committee to that Section of the document and suggested that, if approved, she would request that the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning would prepare a brief proposal on how the funds would be utilised under the Academic Integrity, and Education for Sustainable Development initiatives. .

She highlighted the proposal under Section five, which was the disbursement of funds related to university-led actions which are student oriented.

It was noted that there had been challenges in mobilising projects as there had been significant difficulties in filling the advertised posts. It was helpful in this context that the HEA agreed that it was sufficient to have the funds committed, rather than fully spent in 2023.

Education Committee formally noted its support to the allocation of SATLE funds as described in the circulated document.

The Chair thanked the Dean of Teaching and Learning and also extended her thanks to Dr Martina Crehan and the TEU team for all the work in developing the themes and in anticipation of their support and co-ordination of specific projects across the University.

4.2 *Artificial Intelligence: University Response*

An update was provided under matters arising with respect to the white paper. There were no further updates under this item.

SECTION C: PROGRAMME AND MODULE-SPECIFIC MATTERS

5. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

5.1 *Revised Academic Offering Proposal: Proposal to create new pathway on LLM programme*

The additional pathway to LLM was approved.

With respect to the entry requirements detailed on page 3 as follows: applicants with a combination of professional qualifications and experience who do not have an undergraduate degree may also be considered', the Committee noted that the proposal should reflect the standard wording used for RPL.

5.2 *Revised Academic Offering: MA in Refugee Integration (MARI) - proposal to offer the programme on a hybrid basis from 2024-2025*

Education Committee did not approve the proposal; however, it noted that it is broadly supportive of the intention of the programme to be more flexible in its delivery and will consider the submission of a revised proposal which will take account of the points of feedback below:

- In the documentation it indicates that there are only full-time students so the changes would not make any difference to part-time students (page 2) but later in the document (page 7) it says the students work full-time or part-time, so there seemed to be confusion on what impact there would be on students.
- It is indicated in the documentation that this change will impact a maximum of six modules and therefore it would be very manageable, but the list of potential modules is significantly greater than six. This would imply that there were some modules that could only be taken in person, however, in the documentation, it talks specifically about targeting people who would not come to Ireland.
- It appears from the documentation submitted that students would connect in with the traditional room-based lectures through zoom however in terms of DCU's Quality Assurance around online delivery for international students it does not meet the quality standards in how content should be delivered to online students. Education Committee indicated that it would need reassurance around the quality of the learning experience and recommended using the Principles for Quality Assurance of DCU E-learning and Blended Provision to reframe the proposal. It is suggested that programme proposers might engage with DCU Studio and/or TEU in this regard.
- Although written in the context of the undergraduate student experience, the programme proposers might also consider the 'Blended delivery continuum' in the document Interim Blueprint for a blended undergraduate student experience.

It was also noted that further work has to be completed at an institutional level on the various definitions related to flexible delivery.

5.3 *Revised Academic Offering: MA in Sexuality Studies (MASS)*

This proposal was not approved, and Education Committee indicated that it would consider a revised proposal which would take account of the following points of feedback below:

- It is indicated in the revised academic offering documentation that there has been a change to the research of colleagues in the Faculty of Science and Health, formerly involved in the sexuality studies shared programme, away from sexuality studies, (page 3 item 1: *The Faculty of Science and Health has changed perspective, in both teaching orientations and research trajectories*), however this is not the case. It was requested that the re-submitted paperwork removed discussion about teaching and research in the Faculty of Science and Health (FSH).
- It was noted in the discussion that FSH are fully supportive of this revised programme being fully delivered by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS). It was requested, given that the original programme had been a jointly delivered one, that a formal assurance from the Faculty of Science and Health that they are in agreement with FHSS in going ahead with a reframed master's programme, would also be included in the revised programme submission.
- Related to the point above, and in line with the discussions in 2019, it was recommended by the Committee that the programme title would be changed, perhaps to an *MA in Gender Studies*, reflecting both the focus of the revised programme, and the absence of the expertise in sexuality studies from the Faculty of Science and Health, in this revised offering.
- Following on from the recommended name change, Education Committee requested assurance that the proposed content maps to what internationally would be considered usual content for the specific discipline of Gender Studies.
- It was recommended that it should also be included in the submission the potential impact on student demand, and background on the competitive environment in this space.
- Within the admissions criteria the proposal should reflect the language used for RPL for entry.
- It was noted in the 'Relevance to Career Pathways' section that 'Sexuality/Pastoral education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels' is included. However, with the name change, which also reflects the content change, this would not be an option for educators in this field. It was recommended that this line would be deleted.

It was recommended that the documentation would be revised and re-submitted for the next appropriate meeting of Education Committee. The Dean of FHSS indicated that there may be a time-pressure involved. It was agreed that the Chair would consider taking Chair's action, as appropriate.

SECTION D: OTHER MATTERS

6. Student Survey: Faculty Analysis and Response

The Chair introduced this item, noting that the Student Survey is under review and is likely to change. She noted that in general, with the exception of the impact of Covid, DCU's data under most of the criteria remained stable.

6.1 *DCU Institute of Education*

Professor Charlotte Holland recorded her thanks to the Faculty Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning for the preparation of the report. She drew attention to the following points in the Faculty's response:

There was a lower number of respondents than previous years and it was acknowledged that there is an ongoing difficulty for the DCU Institute of Education because students are on placement during the period of the survey. The Faculty undertook to look at timings and communications to key staff to encourage students to participate in the survey.

Professor Holland noted that the main action points for the DCU Institute of Education would be to:

- Increase visibility of the support services to students
- Explicitly highlight to students where coursework provides students with opportunities for higher order learning.
- Provide more opportunities for students to engage in quantitative reasoning.

She noted too that the DCU Institute of Education CPD day will be used to identify how it can improve its methods in assisting students' understanding of Academic Integrity and GenAI.

There was a general discussion following the briefing and the Chair noted that the DCU Institute of Education had the lowest score in four of the ten indicators. It was noted that there could be a wide range of reasons for this. It was noted too that the outcome for 'quantitative reasoning' had been discussed at the Quality Promotion Committee.

6.2 *Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences*

The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) spoke to this item noting the following from the Faculty's submitted report:

- The data was useful in terms of where FHSS sits in relation to other Faculties;
- Cognisance had to be taken of the range and nature of disciplines within the Faculty which can impact on the various criteria in different ways;
- He highlighted that some programmes are by their nature less vocationally focused than others, and that this impacted on the degree to which career-related conversations might happen with academic staff.

The Chair noted that the report was comprehensive, however the collaborative learning indicator was low and there had not been an action suggested to address it. The Dean agreed that this could be reviewed. The Director of the Quality and Institutional Insights Office noted that further analysis could be done on the data to ascertain what might be bringing this indicator down.

The Dean of Teaching and Learning commended the inclusion of work on the assignment planner facility on Loop in the report and indicated if there are any further resources required with respect to Academic Integrity to let her know.

6.3 *Faculty of Science and Health*

The Dean of the Faculty of Science and Health indicated that her Faculty had taken a different approach to the analysis. She noted that they had focused on fewer criteria and did a more in-depth exploration of their scoring. She noted that the Faculty had explored the following criteria in detail:

- Quantitative reasoning: having analysed the data it was found that scoring varied considerably with discipline and the expected disciplines scored much higher individual scores than the overall score indicated.
- Quality of Interactions (highest scoring indicator). This was consistent across the Faculty.

- Reflective and integrative learning, which was the indicator with the greatest variation in the Faculty. More detailed analysis revealed that the breadth of components explored in this indicator limited the usefulness of the overall indicator score at Faculty level.

The Dean noted, as mentioned by Professor Holland, that one of the key factors in getting quality information from future surveys is being explicit with students in naming their activities with the same terms used in the survey.

7. Any other business

7.1 QQI Classifications project

The Academic Secretary briefed Education Committee on the QQI Classifications project, noting that there are key elements to the project which have to be completed by the end of March 2024 as follows:

- The preparation of case studies for seven individual programmes;
- Engagement at institutional level to address a series of questions;
- Focus groups to consider questions posed by QQI relating to the significance attached to classifications and how they are interpreted by our stakeholders. She noted that the Academic Secretariat is in the process of considering what approach to take to the conduct of those focus groups. She noted that there would be an expectation that Education Committee would comprise one focus group. In addition, there may be an additional two/three groups that would comprise a mix of academic and professional staff.

It was noted that the Academic Secretariat would communicate with the Faculties with respect to potential participants. It was anticipated that the focus groups would be likely to take place at the end of February/beginning of March and would be facilitated by an external party. The Academic Secretary acknowledged the work that colleagues have undertaken to produce individual programme case studies in a very tight timeframe and indicated that there was no possibility of movement on the date for completed submissions.

7.2 Note of thanks

The Chair thanked Professor Charlotte Holland for taking up temporary membership of Education Committee as the Institute of Education representative in the absence of the Dean. She noted her different and knowledgeable perspectives and thanked her for her valued contributions to Education Committee.

The Chair extended her appreciation to Professor Joseph Stokes for his seven years' service to Education Committee. This meeting represented his last meeting as Dean of Graduate Studies. She thanked him for his role in Chairing GRSB and for his valued contribution to Education Committee over the years. She noted his depth of knowledge on the regulatory side and noted that she was assured by his thoroughness as Chair. His insights had been valuable to Education Committee.

Professor Stokes thanked colleagues for their kind words and noted how interesting it had been to be involved in so many of the University academic committees. The Chair wished Professor Stokes well in the next stage of his career.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday, 21 February 2024
at 2.00 pm
in AG01