EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**MINUTES**

Wednesday 8 December 2021

2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m. via Zoom

**Present:** Dr Sarahjane Belton, Dr Claire Bohan, Professor Mark Brown, Ms Jennifer Bruton, Professor Michelle Butler, Ms Kate Goodman, Professor Derek Hand, Ms Margaret Irwin-Bannon (Secretary), Mr Billy Kelly, Dr Anna Logan, Prof Anne Looney, Professor Lisa Looney (Chair), Ms Aisling McKenna, Ms Pauline Mooney, Professor Colm O’Gorman and Dr Blánaid White

**Apologies:** Professor Joseph Stokes

**In attendance** Dr Jing Burgi-Tian

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

1. **Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted.

1. **Minutes of the meeting of Education Committee, 10 November 2021**

The minutes of 10 November 2021 were approved.

1. **Matters arising from the minutes of 10 November 2021**
   1. It was noted that feedback from Faculties on the Employability Statements proposal is awaited. The Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning indicated that he will liaise further with the Director of the Careers Service on the template for the preparation of employability statements. The template will be circulated to Faculties through the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning once completed. It was noted that further updates would follow (Item 5).
   2. It was noted that the exam performance analysis by the Institutional Research and Analysis Officer, deferred from the meeting of 10 November 2021 is on the agenda of this meeting (Item 6).
   3. It was noted that clarification requested by Education Committee with respect to the restructure and retitling of the Professional Diploma in Inclusive and Special Education (new title) was received (Item 12).
   4. It was noted that preparation of an alternative proposal for an exit award from the BEng in Electronic and Computer Engineering is ongoing (Item 3.9).
   5. It was noted that work with respect to the provision of an overview of Education Committee/Vice-President for Academic Affairs/Registrar commitments and activities, and a proposed cycle for reporting to Education Committee, is ongoing (Item 3.10).
   6. It was noted that a policy paper on Collaborative provision and Joint, Double (multiple) and Dual Awards would be prepared over the coming months (Item 4).

**SECTION B: STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION/NOTING**

1. **DCU Undergraduate Exam Results Analysis 2017-2021, presentation by Dr Jing Burgi-Tian**

Dr Jing Burgi-Tian presented on the DCU undergraduate examination results 2017-2021. The following key findings were noted from the presentation and attention was drawn in particular to the outcomes of the two years of the Covid-19 pandemic:

* Grades have been increasing significantly in the past five years particularly during the pandemic period
* Grade differentiation has been decreasing in the past few years, particularly during the last two
* Access students’ grade increase is not as pronounced as for other students during the pandemic period
* The attainment gap between access student and other students is wider in the graduating class of 2021 than in previous cohorts
* Grades of non-EU students have decreased more observably compared to EU and Irish students during the pandemic.

Dr Jing Burgi-Tian provided more detailed data on a Faculty by Faculty basis in terms of precision marks of final year students, grades across all study periods, the variance/differentiation of marks, access, international, disability and mature student performance and a comparator of marks by gender.

In the discussion which took place following the presentation the following were noted:

* There were important factors to be considered within this data, particularly as DCU develops its strategy towards more online learning;
* A factor, which could contribute to the rise at the lower end of the distribution was the change from closed book examinations to continuous assessment, which occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic period;
* Increases in grade can reflect improved teaching and learning;
* It was suggested that the data should be reviewed from a multi-dimensional perspective, e.g. there may be more access students in one Faculty than another and this may explain the differences between Faculties;
* The mode of assessment of modules which are delivered online may be an important factor in the rise in grades. It was noted that data currently isn’t available to establish the link between better grades and mode of assessment, but it was suggested it would be a useful area to analyse. In terms of the capture of data for future analysis, how and in what manner that data is gathered and maintained would be important. It was suggested that it would be useful to capture what assessment mix has happened during the period being considered;
* During the Covid-19 pandemic DCU adapted processes to take account of student circumstances;
* The view was expressed that the trend away from closed book examination assessment would most likely continue and the University needs to give this further consideration;
* It was observed that the rate of change is a more important consideration than grade distribution in and of itself;
* It was suggested that a new grading structure might facilitate a greater differentiation between students;
* A critical aspect to changing to a more continuous assessment based model is how modules and corresponding assessments are designed. During the pandemic, the switch to continuous assessment was a response to circumstances, however colleagues have learned from the experience and will be able to apply these learnings to future assessment design;
* Consideration should be given to whether we apply norm referencing as opposed to criterion referencing.

The Chair indicated that there were important questions to be considered in the context of this data and we need to establish what are our concerns around the data and the findings. The Chair noted that it would be important to make sectoral comparisons to establish whether or not we are out of step with sectoral norms.

She suggested that once Faculties have had an opportunity to consider the data trends that there would be a single issue workshop to consider all the implications and our future plan, particularly in the context of a new strategy.

Dr Jing Burgi-Tian was commended by Committee members for the clarity of the presentation and for the very valuable information provided during the analysis of the data.

1. **Stronger Connections with Further Education (FE) Committee update**

Professor Anne Looney presented on the progress to date with respect to the work of the Stronger Connections with FE Committee.

The update was presented under the following headings:

**Expansion of FE pathways**

It was noted that considerable work has been completed to expand the entry routes to DCU programmes. From 2022 we now have 62 FE routes (up from 38) of our 71 entry undergraduate routes, and over 50% of programmes will accept a QQI award with a minimum of five distinctions. She noted that there is still work to be done on making the information more easily accessible and in ensuring the awareness of programme chairs to DCU’s obligations in this regard.

**Round table event**

A very successful round table event took place on 12 November 2021 involving key stake-holders in the FE sector from our local hinterland and with key staff from the Education and Training Board and SOLAS. The event provided our stakeholders with an opportunity to raise issues which included *inter alia* the dominance of the Leaving Certificate, making the connections that do exist more visible, the intense interest in advanced entry. It was signalled that there was a desire for the formal designation of FE Colleges as DCU partners. The role of the Education and Training Boards (ETB) in negotiating with DCU for all institutions was also signalled as important.

**Steering Group**

The Stronger Connections with Further Education (FE) Committee has been established. Professor Anne Looney proposed, based on the discussions at the round table event, that there would be an additional FE sectoral nominee so that the FE sector could be represented with one member from an institution and another from the ETB. It was noted that an Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning (ADT&L) nominee was awaited and it was intended that the group would meet early in the New Year.

It was agreed that the additional FE sectoral nominee could be added to the membership.

**Timing of Announcement of these developments**

Following the round table event, there were a large number of enquiries around individual programmes and it was realised that further work needed to be completed on our website and in developing an FAQ in advance of a formal press release.

1. **Interim update on academic aspects of DCU Connected Development Programme**

The Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning updated the Education Committee on the progress of the DCU Connected Development Programme with respect to the academic programmes and the Faculties to which it is proposed they would be assigned. The changes were presented in the context of the programmes having originally been accredited as Open Education programmes. The change of academic ownership was being brought for the consideration of the Education Committee to ensure it was satisfied with how the programmes were being aligned. The details of programme assignment are contained in Appendix I of this document.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning and Open Education and Faculty colleagues for the work that had been completed on this project to date.

In the discussion which followed the following were noted:

* The change represented an opportunity, but there were concerns about the resourcing within Schools and Faculties to run these programmes. In response the Chair noted that this was a strategic decision of the University and work is ongoing on the financial implications;
* It was queried where the locus of decision-making would be in terms of continuing to offer the undergraduate programmes. The Chair indicated that this was very much linked to our student modelling strategy and the kind of mix of learners that we want to develop.
* It was suggested that this presents a useful opportunity to clarify the resourcing associated with service teaching in the financial model;
* It was clarified that at this point the individual Faculties would make the decision on application for Springboard funding. It was further clarified that as planning for the new academic year would begin in the New Year, the Faculties were now the decision-makers on these programmes;
* The Director of the National Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL) indicated that there was a wealth of experience within Open Education to draw from in the context of Springboard applications. He noted that the Careers module, which is quite widely used in the Springboard programmes across the University should be assigned a single academic home and not replicated. He thanked the Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning, the Director of Open Education, Dr Orna Farrell and the Working Group for the work that had been completed thus far;
* It was noted that work continues on the transition, and in parallel the Director of Student Support and Development will be leading on student support aspects and the Director of Registry on the operations and logistics pertaining to the moving of Open Education programmes.

The assigned Faculty responsibility for the Open Education programmes, as proposed, was agreed (see Appendix I for listing).

1. **Considerations for quality assurance of DCU e-learning and blended provision**

The Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning introduced this item, noting the context in which the document was developed. He reminded the Committee of the recommendation from the 2019 University QQI Cinnte review to provide a consistent learning experience for students and the recommendation following the thematic review on digital learning to develop guidelines for online delivery of content. In addition, in 2018 the QQI developed Quality Assurance guidelines for providers of blended learning programmes which are now being developed into online programme guidelines.

The principles as outlined in the proposal, as circulated, draw from the ‘*European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) Considerations for Quality Assurance of E-learning* collated under the thematic categories drawn from ESG 2015’.The Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning noted that these proposed considerations were also about the future direction of DCU where we are bringing online learning into the mainstream process e.g. DCU Futures, Open Education programmes into Faculties.

He thanked DCU Studio, the IUA micro-credential project and the TEU for contributing to the document as circulated. He indicated that the document is about establishing principles related to our internal quality processes for e-learning and blended provision.

The Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning sought the views of Education Committee on the proposed principles to be adopted as listed below:

**Learning Design**

1. Defined Standards
2. Designing for presence
3. Designing for flexibility
4. Appropriate blended and online technology use
5. Alignment and coherence

**Scaffolded Interaction**

1. Scaffolding appropriate blended technology
2. Facilitating independent and inter-student engagement
3. Supporting digital best practices

**Evidence-based Continuous Improvement**

1. Learning materials are tailored and updated regularly
2. DCU QA processes are embedded in design processes
3. A culture and cycle of ‘continuous improvement’ is applied internally
4. Student feedback is collated, documented and where appropriate, actioned.

The Students’ Union Vice President for Academic Life noted her support of the document as proposed and expressed her appreciation for the consideration of student feedback.

The Director of the National Institute of Digital Learning provided detailed feedback as follows:

1. There are many different quality frameworks that exist in this space for online and blended learning but it makes sense to anchor DCU’s principles in the language of ESG.
2. When we are thinking about quality assurance principles and responsibility for implementing and monitoring them, it needs to operate at different levels:
   1. Module level
   2. Programme level
   3. Faculty level
   4. Institution level
3. The three elements that have been called out i.e. Learning Design, Scaffolded Interaction and Evidence-based Continuous Improvement, provide strong pillars for a quality assurance framework
4. The core quality considerationreally appears under the “Alignment and Coherence” section in “Design” (point 5 bottom of page 2) where it states the importance of foregrounding in learning outcomes. Two related considerations are designing for who your students are and considering what is appropriate for the culture of the discipline.
5. In terms of “Defined Standards” the challenge is to operationalise, and some institutions state explicit “minimum standards”, including accessibility to the VLE itself. Also items like office hours, the number of interactions per week, these are all minimum standards that can be introduced, whilst also leaving room for innovation and creativity.
6. “Interaction” with lecturers is important but it also takes place within administrative services, student support along with “Content”. In terms of content, a focus on using existing Open Educational Resources (OERs) rather than developing your own content is one way to design for quality. Also, as well as delivering content, we need to recognise learners are producers and co-constructors of content and access to the University Library becomes important in this regard.
7. The “Improvement” domain does raise the question of who is responsible**.**  It is important that DCU continues to monitor and promote quality enhancement at the whole institution level. We need centralised aggregated data to monitor trends and the capacity to strategically assign resources where they can have the greatest impact.
8. Lastly, at the institutional level, it would be useful to define more precisely some of the terms. Terms like ‘blended’, ‘online’, ‘hybrid’ are used loosely, and it would be helpful to have some institution-wide commonly defined language and related descriptions. This point links to the need to have defined delivery modes for reporting purposes.

Other aspects discussed

* The point made previously about the use of terminology was reiterated, the suggestion being made that a one-page glossary addition to the document would be useful. It was asked if consideration might be given to the inclusion of the universal design for learning;
* It was noted that a set of questions needs to be developed based on the principles as a means of evaluating programmes that are seeking to deliver solely online;
* It was suggested with respect to the learning design aspect, if the document could emphasise ‘application’ more strongly. It was suggested after the definition on page 2 of pedagogical knowledge content that ‘and application of same’ would be added, and reflecting that point again under principle 4 of learning design;
* It was suggested that it would be useful to develop an equivalent document that relates to professional units and their support of online-learning (e.g. SS&D, Library, HR for staff etc.). It was agreed that this would be a positive development. It was noted that the Deputy Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning and the Director of Student Support and Development would progress this development off-line;

The Chair thanked the Deputy/Registrar/Dean of Teaching and Learning for expediting this proposal and subject to consideration of the discussion points raised, it was agreed that the principles would be adopted.

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

1. **DCU Futures: BSc in Global Challenges**

It was noted that the BSc in Global Challenges would be considered in detail at the planned meeting of Education Committee Standing Committee (ECSC) on Monday 13 December 2021. It was noted that the programme was due for review in advance of being referred for accreditation.

The work that has been completed on the proposal since its first iteration was commended. The input of the Futures team, TEU and DCU Studio was also acknowledged. It was noted as a result of the intensive work that has been completed the programme was radically different in terms of the student learning journey.

1. **Faculty of Science and Health: Validation proposal: MSc in Nursing**

Education Committee referred the programme for the consideration of the Education Committee Standing Committee (ECSC). The following issues were raised with respect to the

resubmitted validation document, which it was agreed would be discussed at ECSC on Monday 13 December 2021.

The following feedback from Education Committee on the proposal was noted:

* Education Committee continues to have concerns particularly around the relationship with the critically important external colleagues in practice, and their role, and how that relationship will operate;
* Related to that point above, concern was also expressed about the financing and operation of the programme. For example, the team will be looking for very ambitious numbers for the programme, but it will be wholly dependent on engagement with the healthcare settings and their funders;
* The module, Leadership, Governance and Management in Modern Healthcare, should now be reflected in the financial statement;
* It was recommended that even though the School of Law and Government may not have the capacity to provide the teaching on the Healthcare Legislation & Ethics module, they should be responsible for it, rather than the SNPCH;
* Education Committee was not persuaded by the rationale for optional modules;
* Concern was also expressed about how the specialisms will run, in terms of the potential for reputational damage. i.e. If a specialism does not run because it does not achieve ten students, is the team going to continually keep students waiting year on year, or is a decision made in second year that a specialism will run in any event. It was queried if the specialisms could be agreed in advance so that there is clarity for students;

1. **DCU Business School: Validation proposal: Graduate Certificate in Financial Intelligence and Technology**

The programme was introduced by the Dean of Faculty and it was noted that the programme is aligned with Faculty strategy.

Education Committee referred the programme for the consideration of the Education Committee Standing Committee (ECSC). The following items were raised and it was agreed, they would be discussed at ECSC on Monday 13 December 2021.

* As this is an online offering from the outset of the programme, there will be a requirement to provide more detailed information about how it will be delivered.
* It was noted that there is no financial allocation for learning design support, and given its online delivery and the necessary involvement of DCU Studio, this should be addressed.
* The timing of the commencement of the programme will require further discussion.
* It was noted that there is no outline structure for the programme provided in the validation documentation. It was requested that this outline be provided in advance of the ECSC.
* It was clarified that Education Committee is focusing on the validation of the award, however the micro-credential element will need to be explored in parallel.

1. **MA i Léann na Gaeilge, statement on programme viability**

The statement on the ambition of the programme was noted.

1. **Update on the development of the Business Studies ‘Business Analytics’ specialism and approval of External Reviewers**

It was noted that the proposal for the BSc in Business Studies with Business Analytics specialism is currently under development as a DCU Futures programme and will be submitted to Education Committee for consideration in due course. In the update the programme team requested the approval of a panel of nominees in order to seek external review of the proposal.

The nominees were approved.

1. **Any other business**

The Chair wished Education Committee colleagues a Happy and Peaceful Christmas.

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

**Date of next meeting**:

Wednesday, 9 February 2022

at 2.00 pm via Zoom

**Current 2021/22 Open Education Programmes**

High level allocation of programmes to Faculties from 2022/23 onwards:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Undergraduate Programmes | Faculty Home | Comments |
| Diploma/BA in Humanities | FHSS – these three programmes considered as a single unit | As currently structured, these programmes will involve some ‘service teaching’ from IOE and FSH |
| Diploma/BA in English & History |
| BA Single Module |
| Diploma/BA in Humanities (Psychology) | FSH | As currently structured, this programme will involve some ‘service teaching’ from IOE and FHSS |
| Diploma/BSc in Information Technology | FEC – these two programmes considered as a single unit | As currently structured, these programmes will involve considerable amounts of service teaching from across the faculties.  For example, of the 240 credits for the management programme, there are 70 credits of Computer Programming, 50 credits of User Experience (Psychology), 30 credits of Mathematics and Statistics, 75 credits of Management and 15 credits of Networks (Electronic Engineering). |
| Diploma/BSc in Management of Information Technology / Information Systems |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Postgraduate Programmes | Faculty Home | Comments |
| Graduate Diploma/MSc in Management for Sustainable Development | DCUBS – all of these programmes have a common Management core | The differences between these programmes is marked by a small pathway of 15/20 credits of specialist modules.  It’s not clear that each of these specialisms is sustainable in the longer term and may require some re-orientation and re-design. |
| Graduate Diploma/MSc in Management of Clean Technologies |
| Graduate Diploma/MSc in Management of Internet Enterprise Systems |
| Graduate Diploma/MSc in Management of Information Systems Strategy |

Springboard+ and ICT funded Programmes

These programmes have been funded for intakes in 2021/22. The Higher Diplomas are two-year, part-time programmes so continuing students will be funded to complete in 2022/23. Funding for these programmes is allocated on an annual basis on foot of applications made in April/May for the following academic year. All funded programmes are required to include a module on career development; this is done for these and other Springboard+ programmes in the Faculties using module OI501, an Open Education module.  For future Springboard+ applications, it will be important that this module (or another meeting the same need) is in place.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Springboard+ funded for 2021/22 intakes | |
| Programme | Comments |
| Certificate in Computer Programming (previously funded in 2019 and 2020) | These undergraduate Certificates draw on modules in the undergraduate BSc in Information Technology and BSc in Management of Information Technology/Systems. If funded and offered in the future, responsibility for these programmes should follow responsibility for the ‘parent’ programmes |
| Certificate in Software Systems and New Venture Creation (previously funded in 2019) |
| Graduate Certificate in Management of Information Systems Strategy (previously funded in 2019 and 2020) | Each of these Graduate Certificate programmes draws on modules delivered as part of the MSc in Management of Sustainable Development/Clean Technologies/Internet Enterprise Systems/Information Systems Strategy programmes. If funded and offered in the future, responsibility for these programmes should follow responsibility for the ‘parent’ programmes |
| Graduate Certificate in Management of Clean Technologies (previously funded in 2020) |
| Graduate Certificate in Management for Sustainable Development (previously funded in 2020) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ICT funded for 2021/22 intakes (with continuing funding for second year of programmes in 2022/23) | |
| Programme | Comments |
| Higher Diploma in Interaction Design (2-year part-time, previously funded for entry in 2018, 2019, and 2020) | These Level 8 conversion programmes draw on modules in the undergraduate BSc in Information Technology and BSc in Management of Information Technology/Systems. Responsibility for these programmes should follow responsibility for the ‘parent’ programmes |
| Higher Diploma in Management of Information Technology (2-year part-time, previously funded for entry in 2019 and 2020) |
| Higher Diploma in Software Development (2-year part-time, previously funded for entry in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019) |