

Quality Committee Meeting Minutes: 10th November, 2017

Present: Paula Murray (Chair), Anne Ryan, Colin Graham, Niamh Halpenny, Killian Brennan, Siobhán Harkin (Secretary)

Apologies: Marie Griffin, Stephen Buckley

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 19th September 2017 were adopted with one correction; Ms Niamh Halpenny was not present at the meeting.

2. Matters Arising

The Chair welcomed Mr Killian Brennan, as the postgraduate student representative on the Governing Authority, to his first meeting of the Committee.

The Chair update the Committee regarding the appointment of Dr Jeneen Naji as Governing Authority nominee from amongst the academic members. Siobhán Harkin, Director of Strategic Planning and Quality was confirmed as a Member of the Committee, with the role of Secretary.

3. Update on 3rd cycle of quality reviews

The Director of Quality updated the Committee on the status of recent internal quality reviews undertaken in the Faculty of Social Sciences and unit-level reviews.

The peer review group reports of the seven academic department reviews which took place in 2016/17 were circulated to the Committee. A synthesis report is being prepared by the Quality Office and is near finalisation; the report will be sent to members in advance of the upcoming meeting. The aim of the synthesis is to provide an insight into common themes and emerging issues across a suite of reviews. This will enable enhancement-led activities to be developed at Faculty or institutional level in response to review findings. Item 6 on the agenda refers.

The Committee welcomed receipt of the reports and discussed the following common themes which Members had identified:

The issue of staff: student ratios, resourcing and facilities

Proposals for the introduction of workload models. The Committee noted that a significant number of reviewers derived from the UK HE system, where such models are prevalent. The Committee

agreed that any future development of workload models in the University would have to take into account context and culture.

The Director of Strategic Planning and Quality updated the Committee on the status of preparation of Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) for all the reviews discussed. These are well underway; meetings of the relevant HoD, Dean, President and Director of Strategic Planning and Quality have been scheduled for a number of the QIPs. Remaining QIPs will be finalised in January 2018. QIPs will be presented to the Quality Committee once finalised.

In other work, the Director of Strategic Planning and Quality informed the Committee that the internal and external reviewers, as well as staff of the Departments had received a survey in relation to their experience of the quality review process. The Committee welcomed the update and expressed their interest in the results of the survey in the upcoming period.

4. Institutional Review Update

The Director of Strategic Planning and Quality briefed the Committee on updates regarding the Institutional Review, 2018. The finalised Handbook and Terms of Reference were noted. The President is to respond to the QQI in relation to preferred dates for the submission of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and the Visit of the reviewers to the University. The President will establish an appropriate Committee to oversee the Institutional Review process. The terms of reference for this structure are in preparation and will form an item on the next Quality Committee meeting agenda.

5. Student Surveys, Student Feedback, University Rankings

Dr Laura McElwain, Institutional Research Officer (IRO) presented an overview of her role and work and provided the findings from recent student surveys, student feedback and university rankings.

The Committee commended Dr McElwain for the presentation and noted the following as particularly important and warranting further action:

Findings from the **Incoming Student Survey**, particularly in relation to the profile of our student intake, commuting, work outside of college and their decision-making regarding course choices. The Committee was particularly struck by the long commute some students have to take to college. The Committee recommended that the findings be presented at relevant fora – Faculty meetings and Academic Council. The IRO indicated that this dissemination through these fora was standard in previous years and planned for this year also.

Student Evaluation of Learning Experience. The Committee noted the low response rate to SELE and the overall poor response from staff and students to the Survey. The real and perceived lack of relevance, specificity and usefulness of the survey for individual academics in developing their pedagogic approaches were discussed. Survey fatigue and the “why bother” element for students were expressed as a real concern. In addition to the presentation made by Dr McElwain, the Committee noted that similar and repeated concerns were raised in the Peer Review Group Reports of the recent departmental quality reviews. The Committee noted that efforts were being made by the Dean of Teaching and Learning to replace SELE with a fit-for-purpose system of student feedback.

The Committee noted that student evaluation and feedback on modules and T&L was a particularly important plank in the University's quality approach.

The Committee agreed to write to the Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee, expressing its concerns regarding SELE and supporting efforts to replace it with a fit-for-purpose system.

6. Faculty of Social Sciences: Peer Review Group Reports Analysis

Dr Zsuzsanna Zarka from the Office of the Director of Strategic Planning and Quality presented a synthesis of the seven departmental peer review group reports from the Faculty of Social Sciences. As well as areas the Faculty might consider for quality enhancement, the University as a whole could develop cross-cutting themes in this regard. Such themes included:

- explore potential for cross-faculty and shared teaching
- interdisciplinary initiatives for teaching, learning, research and scholarships
- graduate employability
- sharing expertise with colleagues across faculties > non-traditional students, embedding placements and work experience in the curriculum
- excellence in practice-based research, and benchmark accordingly
- University Resource Allocation Model for departments > consider the profile of students in the departments and the increased costs in provision for non-traditional students
- establish new protocol for conveying information to administrative staff regarding policy updates
- formal and regular staff training and induction and development opportunities

The Committee thanked Dr Zarka for the synthesis and looked forward to the full report in this regard.

7. Maynooth University Curriculum Evaluation

The Committee took the decision to defer this item until the next meeting and thanked Dr Nestor for her forbearance.

8. A.O.B.

The upcoming Committee meeting in December will focus on the work planned for Jan-June 2018, the Institutional Review and the presentation on the Curriculum Evaluation. The Chair thanked the Committee for their ongoing work and support for the quality agenda of the University.