

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL
23 MARCH 2009**

A meeting of the Academic Council was held in the Boardroom of the John Hume Building on Monday, 23 March 2009 at 15.00 hours.

Present: J.G. Hughes (President & Chairman), D. Barnes-Holmes, S. Buckley, B. Carolan, N. Carroll, T. Collins, R.V. Comerford, P. Denman, F. Devitt, M. Devlin, S. Doyle, P. Duffy, M. Dunne, H. Durka, H. Fagan, R. Galavan, D.M. Heffernan, K. Kavanagh, M. Kelleher, J. Lowry, F. Lyddy, C. McCauley, J. McGinnity, F. de Meneses, C. Morash, T. Ó Dúshláine, R. Ó hUiginn, C. O’Leary, R. O’Neill, K. Ohlendieck, F. Palmer, R. Pecchenino, M. Peillon, D.B. Redmond, J. Ringwood, A. Ryan, D. Scourfield, R. Shorten, J.A. Walsh, A. Winstanley, A. Witte.

Apologies: M. Boyle, J. Finn, G. Jones, F. Krobb, K. McGroarty, N. Maddox, B Mahon, S. Ó Cinnéide, S. Ó Riain, R. Reilly, L. Taylor.

In attendance: M. Critchley, R. Watson.

The Chairman and President, Professor Hughes, welcomed members of the Academic Council and noted that there was a simultaneous translation service available at this meeting for Irish speakers.

1. Approval of Agenda:

Accepted.

2. Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2009 were agreed and signed, with the addition of Professor Barnes-Holmes to the list of those present at the meeting.

3. Matters Arising:

Minute 5: Financial Update:

The President reported that there had been some further cuts since the previous meeting but that any further update on the financial situation would be premature until the Government had made its supplementary budget announcement in April.

Minute 11: Full Economic Costing (FEC):

The Deputy President, Professor Walsh, informed Council that since the adoption of the procedure regarding Full Economic Costing (FEC) at the last meeting, the Council of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) had advised its members not to participate in the process. He noted that this was disappointing, but he understood that members of IFUT would take advice from its Council. However, he emphasised that the FEC model had to be implemented as an urgent matter so that data could be gathered. He reported that 9 out of 30 units had returned data on over 60 staff to date. He requested that Heads of Departments/Units facilitated those staff who were not members of IFUT to submit their FEC returns to the Finance Office of the University.

Minute 12: Strategic Plan Review:

The President reported that the Strategic Plan Review had been adopted by the Governing Authority.

Minute 17: Future Role of the NUI:

The President reported that Dr Maurice Manning had been recently elected Chancellor of the National University of Ireland.

4. Correspondence: [AC.2008-2009.32]

A letter dated 3 March 2009 to the Secretary of the Academic Council, Professor Scourfield, from Dr Richard Watson, Director of Quality, had been circulated. It was noted that the Quality Promotion Sub-Committee (QPSC) had agreed to request that Council approve an increase in the number of possible internal reviewers for quality reviews. The proposal to establish a larger panel of possible internal reviewers, consisting of the members of the QPSC, the Associate Deans, and former members of the QPSC or its predecessor, the Quality Promotion Unit, was accepted.

5. Examination Matters: PhD Reports: [AC.2008-2009.33]

The Registrar drew members' attention to the circulated summary of PhD reports recently considered at the following Faculty meetings:

The Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy had accepted on 2 March 2009 the PhD reports for six candidates in the Department of History and a candidate in Roinn Sean-Ghaeilge.

The Faculty of Science and Engineering had accepted on 3 March 2009 the PhD reports for two candidates in the Department of Experimental Physics and a candidate in the Department of Biology.

The Faculty of Social Sciences had accepted on 9 March 2009 the PhD report for a candidate in Sociology.

Noted.

6. Assessment Board Report:

The President reported that Professor Luke Gibbons had been appointed Professor of Irish Literary and Cultural Studies in the School of English, Media and Theatre Studies, and would take up this new post in August 2009. Noted.

7. Appointment of Assessment Boards:

The President proposed membership of assessment boards as follows:

Amendments to the following board appointed at the meeting held on 2 February 2009:

Lecturer\Assistant Lecturer in Nua-Ghaeilge - Scoil an Léinn Cheiltigh

Internal: Dr David Redmond (President's nominee and Chair)

External: Dr Máirin Nic Eoin has withdrawn and will be replaced by

Dr Pádraigín Riggs, Roinn na Nua-Ghaeilge, Coláiste na hOllscoile, Corcaigh

Accepted.

Lecturer\Assistant Lecturer in Philosophy – Department of Philosophy

- Internal:** Professor John G. Hughes (President) or his nominee
Professor Peter Denman, Dean of Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy
Dr Michael Dunne, Acting Head of the Department of Philosophy
Dr Mette Lebech, Department of Philosophy
- External:** Professor Martin Stone, Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Professor John Haldane, Professor of Philosophy, Centre for Philosophy & Public Affairs, Department of Moral Philosophy, University of St. Andrews

Accepted.

Lecturer\Assistant Lecturer in English – School of English, Media and Theatre Studies

- Internal:** Professor John G. Hughes (President) or his nominee
Professor Chris Morash, Head of School of English, Media & Theatre Studies
Dr Emer Nolan, School of English, Media & Theatre Studies
Dr Colin Graham, School of English, Media & Theatre Studies
- External:** Professor Elleke Boehmer, Professor of World Literature in English, Wolfson College, University of Oxford
Professor Declan Kiberd, School of English, Drama and Film, University College Dublin

The President informed Council that this post had been agreed owing to the impending retirement of a member of staff and the high student numbers in this School.

Accepted.

Academic Director of IVI\Professorship in Business Innovation

- Internal:** Professor John G. Hughes (President and Chair)
Professor Ray O’Neill, Vice-President for Research
Dr Robert Galavan, Head of School of Business & Law
- External:** Mr Martin Curley, Intel Ireland, IVI
Professor Brian Fitzgerald, Vice President Research, University of Limerick

The President informed Council that the post of Academic Director of IVI (Innovation Value Institute) would be funded by the Institute. However the appointment of the assessment board had been brought to Council owing to the associated offering of a professorship to attract suitably qualified candidates. The assessment board was provisionally accepted, subject to a female member being appointed to achieve gender balance. This appointment was delegated to the President.

Professorship of Law - School of Business and Law

- Internal:** Professor John G. Hughes (President and Chair)
Dr Robert Galavan, Head of School of Business & Law
Professor Tom Collins, Head of Education Department
Professor Mark Boyle, Head of Department of Geography
- External:** Professor Michael Feintuck, Professor of Law and Head of School, University of Hull
The Honorable Professor Justice Peter Kelly, Judge of the High Court and Head of the Commercial Court, Dublin

The President noted that the creation of this post was essential and that it would be funded through the demand for degrees in law. The assessment board was provisionally accepted,

subject to a female member being appointed to achieve gender balance. This appointment was delegated to the President.

Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Development - School of Business and Law

Internal: Professor John G. Hughes (President and Chair)
Dr Robert Galavan, Head of School of Business & Law
Professor Anne Ryan, Head of Department of Adult and Community Education
Dr Frank Devitt, Head of Department of Electronic Engineering

External: Professor Patrick Flood, Professor of Human Resource Management, Dublin City University
Mr Brian Kirwan, Assistant National Director of Human Resources, Health Service Executive

Accepted.

8. Appointment of Adjunct Professors:

The President invited the relevant Heads of Department to comment on the Adjunct Professors whose appointment they had recommended and had been endorsed by the Board for Entry to Professorship.

Professor Comerford, Head of the Department of History, informed Council that Dr Christopher Ridgway had made a tremendous contribution to the fields of curatorship and the study of historic houses in Ireland.

Dr Galavan, Head of the School of Business and Law, reported that Mr Patrick Bartholomew Ahern, T.D., was renowned for his work relating to conflict resolution, industrial relations and partnerships.

Both of the above appointments were endorsed by the Academic Council.

9. Strategic Alliances:

The President briefed members on reports in the press concerning alliances between third level institutions and speculation on possible amalgamations and rationalisations. He indicated that much of the reporting was not accurate. With regard to the recent announcement of the establishment of the Innovation Alliance between UCD and TCD, the President welcomed this development as it would increase the international spotlight on all of Ireland's excellent university research programmes. He hoped it would stimulate greater funding throughout the system and allow for the development of a long term sustainable knowledge economy. Council noted that NUI Maynooth's own areas of research excellence would gain greater prominence in this new environment and that the University would work with the other institutions to make sure that the benefits were felt throughout the country.

The President acknowledged that concerns had been raised about possible rationalisations that might impact on small academic departments. He confirmed that no discussions had taken place regarding closing or merging departments. The possibility of running joint masters' programmes with other institutions might, however, be explored. The President indicated that he would prefer to collaborate with other institutions. He informed Council of discussions that had taken place with other institutions which might result in strategic alliances in areas of

particular expertise. However, he noted that it was not possible to give absolute assurances concerning any developments at this time because of the global economic situation and the impossibility of knowing what would happen at governmental level.

In conclusion the President stated that he would keep the Academic Council and the Governing Authority fully apprised of developments. A number of observations were made by members, and the President was thanked for his frank appraisal. The President asked that members of Council communicate the current situation to their colleagues.

10. Draft Promotion Scheme to the Grade of Professor: [AC.2008-2009.34]

The President invited Professor Walsh, the Deputy President, to present the revised draft procedures for Promotion to the grade of Professor (Salary Scales A and B). The Deputy President reminded Council that at the last meeting it had been agreed that he would convene a working group consisting of a professor from each of the three Faculties, the Vice-President for Research, and the Dean of Teaching and Learning, to work on the new scheme. He reported that amongst the main issues of principle addressed by the group were the following:

- The relationship between the requirements for promotion to Professor and those for promotion to Senior Lecturer;
- The distinguishing attributes of the grade of Professor;
- Whether there could be more than one track for promotion, i.e., whether it would be possible to be promoted to the grade of Professor primarily on the basis of evidence relating to either teaching or research, or whether it was necessary to be outstanding in relation to both; and
- The weighting that might be attached to previous achievements vis-à-vis evidence of potential and plans for the future.

It was noted that this draft document was for discussion by the Academic Council and the Faculties and would come back to the May meeting of Council for approval. The Deputy President also reported that the proposed scheme had been sent to IFUT for information. A number of members sought clarification on aspects of the proposed assessment procedure.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the proposed twin-route system, with different emphases between research and teaching and learning, should be approved, with the proviso that where the teaching and learning stream was prioritised, achievement in the area should be capable of being demonstrated in published work. The Deputy President invited members to send any further comments on the draft scheme directly to him.

Draft Promotion Scheme to the Grade of Lecturer: [AC.2008-2009.35]

The Deputy President also reminded Council that at the last meeting when the new Senior Lecturer promotion scheme had been discussed, it had been noted that there was no provision for promotion from the Assistant (Junior) Lecturer grade to the Lecturer grade. The new draft promotion scheme to the Grade of Lecturer now before Council was parallel to the Senior Lecturer scheme, but with appropriately reduced requirements. The Deputy President further reminded Council that relatively few appointments were made at the Assistant (Junior) Lecturer grade.

A number of points were made by members. The PhD requirement in particular seemed inappropriately strict in the light of the requirements laid down for promotion to Senior

Lecturer. It was agreed to add “normally” to this requirement as some applicants could have professional experience that might be considered comparable. However, it was noted that in many disciplines a PhD was considered essential for a lectureship.

The timescale of the implementation of this new scheme was queried. The President advised that if the scheme was approved at the next meeting of Academic Council, and at the Governing Authority meeting scheduled for June, then a call could be made in June, with the outcomes known in September. The President invited members to send any further comments to the Deputy President.

11. Teaching and Learning Committee Business:

The President invited the Dean of Teaching and Learning, Professor Collins, to report on the business from the Teaching and Learning Committee.

(a) Membership

The Dean of Teaching and Learning requested that Dr Una Crowley, recently appointed as Manager of the Teaching and Learning Centre, and Ms Orla Hanratty, Teaching Development Officer, be added as *ex-officio* members of the Teaching and Learning Committee. Agreed.

(b) Revised Teaching and Learning Strategy: [AC.2008-2009.36]

The draft revised Teaching and Learning Strategy for the period 2009-11 had been circulated for approval by the Academic Council. The Dean reported that he did not intend to go through the document in detail as it was quite lengthy and included two comprehensive appendices which were appended to the Strategic Plan of the University for 2009-11. He noted that this draft had, owing to time constraints, not been through the Teaching and Learning Committee. The Dean reminded Council members that the first statement of strategy for Teaching and Learning had been adopted by Council in March 2007. Following initiatives in both undergraduate and graduate education as part of the University Strategic Innovation Plan, a review of the Teaching and Learning Strategy commenced in 2008. The revised Strategy now before Council had been aligned with the Strategic Goals of the University for the next two years. The Dean referred to the four core themes of (1) developing undergraduate education; (2) developing graduate education; (3) fostering access, fostering lifelong learning; and (4) pedagogical innovation and transformation.

The revised Teaching and Learning Strategy for 2009-11 was adopted by Council and the Dean of Teaching and Learning thanked. The Dean acknowledged the input of Ms Claire McAvinia of the Teaching and Learning Centre in the redrafting of the strategy.

12. BA International: [AC.2008-2009.37]

The President invited Professor Collins, Dean of Teaching and Learning, to present the circulated document on behalf of Professor Taylor, the Dean of International Education. Professor Collins reported that this proposal from the International Education Subcommittee sought to expand the participation of students in four-year BA programmes which include a year studying outside of Ireland. It stated that there were no structural impediments to offering this possibility to most of the BA students in the University, but the following should be addressed: university culture; faculty practice; student/faculty knowledge; and university policy. The Assistant Registrar and Admissions Officer, Mr McGinnity, informed members that in the past some students in receipt of local authority grants had experienced difficulties

obtaining funding for a year spent abroad, and there was a need for clarity with local authorities and other funding bodies concerning a fourth year of study.

Members made a number of observations on this proposal. These included the following:

- (i) A four year degree could now be more attractive to students than in the past;
- (ii) Clarification of the administrative requirements for students availing of a year abroad was required, as there were limitations to what individual academic departments could provide;
- (iii) Spending a year abroad without the requirement of learning a foreign language, as in the current European Studies programme, was not as beneficial;
- (iv) Appropriate credits needed to be attached to the year abroad;
- (v) A fourth year in an Irish-speaking area could be offered to students of the Irish language.

The President noted the comments of members and recognised that students required support to avail of opportunities to study abroad. He reported that the International Office was small, and said that he would come back to Council on the issue of support.

13. Report from the Academic Programme Subcommittee: [AC.2008-2009.38]

The Registrar referred to the report from the Academic Programme Subcommittee in which the following new programmes were recommended:

Department: Geography
Programme: MSc in Geographical Information Systems & Remote Sensing

Department: Economics, Finance & Accounting
Programme: BA International Finance and Economics

Department: Adult and Community Education
Programme: NUI Certificate in Helpline Counselling

Change to existing programme:

Department: Business and Law
Programme: Business to be added as a subject offered under MH101
Law to be added as a subject offered under MH101

All the above programmes were accepted, subject to executive approval as approval of the academic content of the programmes should not be interpreted as approval of any additional resource requirements. Noted.

In addition the Registrar informed members that a change had been proposed by the Department of Computer Science to the following programme which had originally been approved in 2006 but had not receive external funding at that time:

Erasmus Mundus – European MSc in Reliable Software Systems (provisional title).

This masters' programme would be offered by the Department of Computer Science in partnership with St. Andrews University, Scotland and Université Henri Poincaré, Nancy, France. Accepted subject to review of the final proposal by the President, the Registrar and the Dean of Teaching and Learning.

14. Annual Report from the Examination Appeals Board: [AC.2008-2009.39]

The President invited the Chair of the Examination Appeals Board, Professor Morash, to present the annual report for 2008. Professor Morash reported that the number of examination appeals had almost doubled in 2008 to 28 but while this was a substantial percentage increase, NUI Maynooth continued to have a very low number of appeals compared to the other Irish universities. He further reported that there had been a sharp decline in the number of examination appeals upheld. The other notable difference in the pattern of appeals for 2008 related to the examinations in respect of which appeals were lodged. In the past, there were more appeals relating to examinations conducted in the summer than in the autumn. In 2008, 18 of the 28 appeals related to the summer examination marks; the remainder related to autumn examinations. A substantial percentage of these were lodged under Ground (b) “if the student is not satisfied that the checking of his/her examination result was properly carried out”, and five of the ten appeals received in the autumn related to a single programme; none of these appeals was upheld.

The Chair of the Examination Appeals Board also drew the attention of Council members to the changes to the appeals procedure which were approved last year by the Academic Council and would take effect from summer 2009. In summary, students who appealed under Ground (b) “if the student is not satisfied that the checking of his/her examination result was properly carried out” would be obliged to request a recheck through the Registrar’s Office in the first instance, while students who appealed under Ground (c) “if there are circumstances which the Examination Board was not aware of when its decision was taken”, would have to show evidence of consultation with the department(s) and the response to any such notification; if no steps had been taken in this regard, the students would be requested to explain why this was the case.

Finally it was noted that the new expanded Examination Appeals Board with faculty representatives had worked well during 2008 and Professor Morash thanked the Students’ Union for facilitating the annual information evenings for student representatives. The President of the Students’ Union, Mr Durka, thanked the Chair for providing a recent session which had been very useful.

The President thanked the Chair, Professor Morash, and the members of the Examination Appeals Board for their efforts over the past year. It was acknowledged that the relatively low number of appeals was due to many of the cases being resolved at departmental level in conjunction with the Consultation Day, following the publication of the examination results.

15. Annual Report from the Computer Centre 2008: [AC.2008-2009.40]

The Director of the Computer Centre, Mr Carolan, was invited by the President to present the annual report on the work of the Computer Centre for 2008. Mr Carolan reported that as in previous years, the report analysed the activities of the Centre under the following headings: (1) Operational Performance, (2) Significant Developments/Enhancements and (3) Compliance/Regulatory Issues. He referred to the following highlights of the operational performance of the systems and networks during 2008:

- Excellent uptime figures
- No internet connectivity outage during 2008

- 33 hour outage caused by the failure of the core router (the heart of the campus network) on a Bank Holiday
- Two serious power outages
- Major security incident on the Moodle server in September

In addition the Director reported that he was aware that the User Support service could be improved if there were more resources, and in particular, he would like to be able to prioritise support for researchers. The demand for student computing services continued to grow. Providing wireless connections on the South Campus had proved problematic in the older buildings. The staff of the Computer Centre would welcome information from academic staff concerning the software packages for which they wished to have support, in addition to any hardware requirements that might arise in new buildings. The Director noted that with 23 staff (plus term-time computing assistants), the Computer Centre had a modest staff complement compared to other institutions.

Members made the following comments:

- (a) The Head of the Department of Adult and Community Education thanked Mr Carolan and his staff for all their work and in particular indicated her appreciation of the computing facilities provided on the Kilkenny Campus;
- (b) The Head of the Department of History endorsed these comments and referred to the computer link that had been provided to Castletown House;
- (c) A member enquired about the amount of “social computing” that occurred on campus and the Director reported that this issue had been discussed with the Students’ Union and that access to social networks was blocked on computers in certain locations;
- (d) The President of the Students’ Union thanked Mr Carolan and the staff of the Computer Centre for their hard work during the year.

The President congratulated Mr Carolan, the Director of the Computer Centre, and his staff on a successful year, noting that the Centre was under-resourced. The annual report was adopted.

16. **Research Committee Business;**

The President asked the Vice-President for Research, Professor O’Neill, to report on the latest Research Committee business.

(a) **Recommendation for an Institute of Chemical Biology [AC.2008-2009.41]**

The Vice-President for Research referred to the circulated document concerning a proposal from Professors Ohlendieck (Biology), Lowry (Chemistry) and Doyle (Biology) to establish a Research Institute in the area of Chemical Biology (formal title yet to be agreed). He reported that the Research Committee was satisfied that the proposed institute would considerably enhance the university’s current research profile and that the designated criteria for the establishment of a research institute had been met. The Committee viewed interdisciplinary research in the area of chemical biology as clearly of long-term importance, and an area in which NUIM had very considerable demonstrated strengths. It was also noted that favourable reports on the proposal had been received from three eminent international referees.

The Research Committee had therefore recommended that the application be accepted on the basis of clear academic and strategic merit, and that the institute should be formally established once a suitable business and operating plan for the institute had been agreed with the President

and the Bursar. The President noted this was a strong proposal, and it was accepted by the Academic Council.

(b) HEA/Forfás Bibliometric Study of Research Activity in Ireland

The Vice-President informed members that the HEA and Forfás has recently commissioned a Mapping Study of Research Activity in Ireland which he wished to bring to their attention as it would require the co-operation of all departments. As a first step in this study, the universities had been asked to provide a list of the variations in institutional name, to be given to external consultants who would carry out a bibliometric exercise. He reported that a search had generated over twenty variations on the name of this university. The Vice-President for Research stressed the importance of using an agreed institutional title as government agencies would increasingly be using external databases in assessing the publications record of NUI Maynooth staff. In an attempt to achieve greater consistency in publications deriving from this institution, the Vice-President requested that all staff use the following as the institutional title: "National University of Ireland Maynooth" (no commas) or "Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad".

In addition the Vice-President informed Council that an updated research information database (InfoEd) was being rolled out. This showed significant improvements compared with the previous version. It was noted that it was important that academic members of staff review and update their research profiles.

(c) PRTL 5

The Vice-President for Research reported that since the last meeting of Council work had continued on the PRTL 5 submission (deadline of 2 April) on the assumption that the funding would come through, though there was the possibility of some cuts. He provided an update on the ongoing NUI Maynooth internal process for projects to be submitted under the PRTL 5 initiative. The University was currently considering eight projects to be submitted under the Infrastructure and Graduate Education elements of the call; these would involve alliances with institutions across Ireland. In addition, the University might be involved in three National Infrastructure projects.

The President thanked Professor O'Neill for his briefing.

17. Any other business:

- (a) A representative of the Faculty of Science and Engineering, Dr Kavanagh, reported that he had carried out a survey of the manner in which the results from the Semester 1 examinations were transmitted to students in the various departments within the Faculty. He had discovered significant variations in practice, and recommended that a standard format should be agreed and followed as to the dissemination of these examination results. The Registrar reminded members that some years before it had been proposed at a meeting of the Academic Council that the Examinations Office should publish the provisional results from the First Semester examinations. However the proposal had been rejected at that time. The Registrar reported that the Examinations Office would have no difficulty disseminating these results if a timetable for the submission of provisional results by the departments could be agreed and he offered to bring a proposal on this to Council. Noted.
- (b) The Deputy President informed members that consideration was being given to possible name changes to buildings on the North Campus in pursuit of an enhanced corporate identity for the

University. It had been proposed that a small working group might be formed to undertake this task and solicit possible new names. It was agreed that Professor Paddy Duffy should be asked to proceed to set up such a group. A member pointed out that some of the current names, for example those of saints or connected to the local area, such as Rye Hall, should be carefully discussed before any changes were agreed. In addition an Irish translation of any new names would be required. Noted.

- (c) The President referred to recent press reports on highly paid academics and informed members that no member of staff in NUI Maynooth was paid outside of the official published pay scales and the HEA approved schemes for departures.

18. Date of Next Meeting:

The next ordinary meeting will be held on **Monday, 25 May 2009** at 15.00 hours in the Boardroom of the John Hume Building.

The Meeting concluded at 17.15 hours.

Professor David Scourfield
Secretary

Items for the next ordinary meeting should be sent to the Secretary of Council, c/o Academic Council Office, Humanity House, South Campus by midday on Wednesday, 13 May 2009.