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(Title of Item)

Policy on the Cessation of a
Subject/Discipline at UCC

Policy on the cessation of a subject/discipline at UCC.

1. Introduction and Context

In most universities, there is a process of evolution through the development of new academic areas and the cessation/replacement of others. The process of change and development in UCC has mainly been driven by expansion and the selective support of new appointments and developments in strategic, prioritised, subject areas. The consequences arising from the opposite occasions when the process of change is driven by contraction or changing strategic priorities as the University seeks to reduce its commitment to, or ultimately to withdraw completely from, areas have yet to be formally addressed however. Elsewhere, deliberative processes have been used in such situations, and in the light of the growing resource constraints, UCC requires formulation of an appropriate process to address the cessation of an existing and institutionally recognised academic subject/discipline assigned to a College under the Principal Statute. It should be noted that this is different from the cessation of a degree programme unless such cessation puts at risk the entire subject/discipline.

Whilst it will be the norm that the decisions that are taken about the future academic structure of the University (in terms of its component disciplines) will be taken on academic criteria, nevertheless, financial issues cannot be ignored if the management of the University is to ensure balanced budgets, particularly at times of severe resource constraints, and that it delivers value for money in return for government funding.

Although fundamental decisions about the future of subjects/disciplines may only be rarely needed, they are of such consequence that they should be collective decisions taken within the University on the basis of a detailed consideration of the strategic priorities at both College and University levels.

The following policy sets out a process to support decision-making regarding the cessation of a subject/discipline. In the implementation of the policy, cognisance must be taken of the role the university plays within the region and of the particular environment facing universities in Ireland (viz the universities as a component of the Public Service and the consequent reduced autonomy compared to universities in other jurisdictions). It should be noted that this policy is not intended to cover situations where subjects/disciplines are transferred to or integrated with another academic unit within the university through the ongoing process of schoolification/academic restructuring.

2. Criteria for a request for cessation

A request for the cessation of a subject/discipline at UCC may emanate either from the Head of College responsible for the subject/discipline or from the executive of the University (UMTO).

This policy sets down the criteria and procedures governing the introduction, consideration, processing and implementation of such a request.

A request for cessation of a subject/discipline may be justified on a range of grounds, such as a prolonged decline in student demand or quality, consistently inadequate performance in quality reviews and/or research quality reviews, in light of changes in College and/or University strategy, on financial grounds in view of the requirement for a College and the

University to return a balanced budget, or in relation to external factors beyond the university's control.

Where the cessation of a specific programme will in effect lead to the cessation of a subject/discipline, or the closure or re-assignment of an academic unit, then the procedure outlined below also applies.

3. Cessation procedure

Stage 1 A request by a Head of College for the cessation of a subject/discipline, having consulted with the relevant staff of the subject/discipline, shall be referred to relevant College Executive Management Committee(s) in the first instance for consideration. The relevant College Council(s) shall also be consulted prior to the request being formally submitted by the responsible Head of College to the University Management Team Operations (UMTO) for consideration and comment and then to Academic Council for consideration and recommendations. A request by the President, on behalf of UMTO, for the cessation of a subject/discipline shall also be referred to relevant Head of College(s) and College Executive Management Committee(s) in the first instance for consideration and the head of subject/discipline will be notified accordingly. The relevant College Council(s) shall also be consulted prior to the request being formally submitted by UMTO to Academic Council for consideration and recommendations.

The time scale for consultation should be set by the Head of College or UMTO as appropriate.

The potential resource impact and consequences (in terms of income/costs and staffing) should form part of the consideration leading to recommendations.

Academic Council may:

- a) *Recommend cessation to UMTO and Governing Body under Stage 3 of the process.*
- b) *Defer the decision on recommendations pending further information to be submitted as defined by Academic Council to the next available meeting of Academic Council or at a date specified by Council but not later than three months from the initial Academic Council meeting (Stage 2 of the process).*
- c) *Defer the decision pending the submission of a development and/or remediation plan to be agreed by College Council(s) and submitted to Academic Council by a date specified by Academic Council but not later than six months from the initial Academic Council meeting (Stage 2 of the process).*

Stage 2 If the outcome of Stage 1 is to request further information or a development plan, upon receipt of the requested documentation from the responsible Head of College, Academic Council may:

- a) *Recommend cessation to the UMTO and Governing Body under Stage 3 of the process.*
- b) *Unconditionally agree the development plan and recommend retention of the subject/discipline to UMTO as part of the University's academic portfolio.*
- c) *Conditionally agree the development plan, conditions to be met by a date specified by Council.*

d) Defer the decision pending the submission of a revised development plan for the subject/discipline to be agreed by College Council(s) and submitted to Academic Council by a date specified by Council but not later than three months from the Academic Council meeting. Should such a revised plan be deemed unacceptable, the cessation of the subject/discipline should be recommended to UMTO and Governing Body under Stage 3 of the process.

Development plans should be cognisant of the HE landscape including opportunities for external collaboration and regional clustering.

Stage 3 The final decision for the cessation of a subject/discipline rests with the Governing Body having regard to the views and recommendations of Academic Council and UMTO.

In the event a development plan is approved and the subject/discipline retained Academic Council shall report this to Governing Body for review.

Where a development plan is approved Academic Council shall receive a report on progress from the responsible Head of College annually from the date at which the development plan was agreed (or a date specified by Council) for a period of at least three years. Academic Council will consult further with UMTO and College Council(s) on retaining the subject/discipline as appropriate.

If Academic Council concludes that the development plan has not been successful and cessation of the subject/discipline is necessary the recommendation shall be submitted to UMTO and thereafter to Governing Body for approval.

In all such cases where a decision for the cessation a subject/discipline is reached the University shall act in accordance with internal procedures and relevant employment legislation, and notify relevant external bodies within appropriate time scales, to assure that the interests of staff and present and prospective students are protected as appropriate. The implementation of this policy should be carried out within time scales appropriate to the needs of the University whilst cognisant of the above interests.

Flowchart for Policy on cessation of a subject/discipline

