Information Sheet – Programme Structures

This information sheet provides details on how the **programme structures** for collaborative programmes are managed, including the representation of modules and other types of activity undertaken at a partner institution on the UCD Curriculum Management System and the UCD student record.

Collaborative Programme Basics: the programme approval mechanism

The **Programme Development, Approval and Review Framework (PDARF)** provides the relevant information for supporting programme development, including collaborative programmes, within the University (see https://www.ucd.ie/registry/staff/registryservices/curriculum/programmeapprovalpdarf/). The **Framework for Collaborative Programmes at UCD** is a component of PDARF and is focussed on providing specific support for collaborative initiatives.

All collaborative programmes must be approved through the normal routes for new programme approval. The relevant forms for collaborative programmes include Global Partnerships Proposal Form - Strategic Case, PDARF2, PDARF3 and PDARF4, and where a collaboration is being introduced into an already existing programme, PDARF7 is to be used in place of PDARF2 and PDARF3. All of the forms are available at the above weblink.

All forms must be completed and submitted to the relevant College Executive and/or Governing Board, as well as the University Management Team (UMT) where applicable in accordance with the procedures outlined in the PDARF approval process.

Collaborative Programme Directors should list as much detail as possible about the collaborative programme on these forms – all of this information is critical for ensuring that the University can support the programme effectively.

Programme Structures

The following general principles and guidelines apply to the management of programme structures for collaborative programmes:

- Details of the academic components offered by all institutions participating in a collaboration should be provided in the relevant PDARF proposal form – this includes lists of modules, their credit value and the institution responsible for delivering them.
- There are **three options** related to the mechanism by which UCD captures information about modules offered by another institution with which it is collaborating:
  - **Option 1** – transfer credit block, wherein a single block of credits is attached to the student's record to represent activity that they undertook at another institution. Normally this is represented as generic transfer credits. Where there is a demonstrated need, the transfer credit block may include the partner institution's name in the title (see example below). These credits are undifferentiated and therefore do not show the exact details of the individual modules that a student may have undertaken. These credits are normally grade point neutral and GPA neutral, or, through discussion and negotiation with the partner institution, it may be possible to arrive at a composite grade for the transfer credit block. In these instances, there must be a 'Grades/Marks Table of Equivalences', normally included in the formal Memorandum of Agreement that underpins the collaboration, so that it is clear how UCD grades relate to the grading/marking system of the partner institution.

    <u>Option 1 Example</u>: If a student spends a semester (normally of a value of 30 credits) at the University of Deusto (Spain) they may simply have 30 generic 'Transfer Credits' put against their record, or may be registered to a single module called 'Transfer Credits (Deusto)' of a value of 30 credits put up against their record. These credits are graded simply as 'pass' or 'completed', unless agreement is reached for Deusto to provide a single composite grade for the 30 credit block.

- o **Option 2** – shadow modules, wherein 'shadow' versions of modules provided by another institution are created on the UCD system. Collaborative Programme Directors may request new 'shadow' modules through the Curriculum Management System in the same way as they request a normal UCD module. In such instances, it is important to ensure that the name of the institution responsible for delivery of the module is included in the module title.   The marks/grades for these modules need to be converted to the UCD grading system and may be applied in the same way that grades for any UCD-owned module are applied (ie through Gradebook), and therefore then contribute to the student's GPA. In these instances, there must be a 'Grades/Marks Table of Equivalences', normally included in the formal Memorandum of Agreement that underpins the collaboration, so that it is clear how UCD grades relate to the grading/marking system of the partner institution.

    Option 2 Examples:
    - ☐ **ECON42035 Global Economics (TCD)**, 5 credits – for a module in Global Economics offered by Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.
    - ☐ **BIOL40337 Environmental Biotechnology (Groningen)**, 10 credits – for a module in Environmental Biotechnology offered by Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, The Netherlands.

- o **Option 3** – there are cases where a PhD student, in consultation with their supervisor/doctoral studies panel, elects to take an individual module in an external institution where the module is not a constituent part of a UCD Thematic or other Doctoral Programme. An example of modules that might be taken would be the disciplinary modules available through the Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance (DRHEA) Graduate Education Strand. In this circumstance, the student and supervisor should follow existing Graduate School-specific procedures in seeking Graduate School Board approval for taking external modules (RPL). The marks/grades for these modules could be converted to the UCD grading system. Recommendations of the Graduate School Boards are implemented by UCD Student Records via the Delegated Authority Decision process.

- The choice of option will have an impact on the student's transcript. For option 1, the transfer credit block will appear on the transcript, whereas in option two and three the individual modules will appear with the institution which delivered the module identified in the title of the module.
- A clear statement regarding the preferred approach to management of modules delivered by institutions other than UCD should be provided on the relevant PDARF form as appropriate. It is also useful to provide a general overview of the 'student learning pathway' – that is, a clear indication of how much time they spend, or credits they earn, in particular institutions over the course of an individual student's progress through the programme.
    - o For example, in the case of a taught Masters exchange programme, the structure of the studies might be: 30 ECTS credits at UCD in semester 1; 30 ECTS credits at the partner university in semester 2; 30 ECTS credits Master dissertation.