

Disciplinary ownership of modules: core principles and a protocol for conflict resolution.

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Disciplinary ownership of modules-what are the issues?

Providing an excellent educational experience is core to UCD's strategy. The strength of our disciplines underpins the quality of our degree programmes and contributes to the depth of the educational experience in UCD. Programme quality and the student experience are enhanced by the availability of experts to teach their discipline and many schools deliver specialist modules to programmes outside of their school or college, in particular modules where discipline fundamentals are taught.

There have been a number of cases in the last few years where discipline specific modules delivered by the school that is home to a discipline/subject head have been replaced by equivalent modules delivered by another school. In other cases new modules have been established by a school, without consideration of the available subject expertise and the disciplinary home of the subject.

The issue of disciplinary ownership of modules was raised by the President at the Extended Leadership forum in January where it was made clear that if "inappropriate" teaching of modules outside of the expertise of the School occurred, action would need to be taken.

In summary schools that are the disciplinary home of a subject have issues with

- Loss of core modules they deliver to a degree programme in another school when a similar replacement module is introduced by the other school.
- Programme changes resulting in the loss of students from a module, through removal of a core designation for a cohort of students from another school taking the module.
- Creation of new modules without consideration of where the disciplinary expertise exists within the institution.
- Programme changes made at very short notice without any discussion or due consideration for the budgetary and staffing impacts on a school.
- The employment of specialists outside of the home school of a particular discipline leading to a dilution of discipline specialists across the university.

To address these concerns a set of core principles to support a collegial approach to discussion and decision-making around the contribution of discipline experts to programmes across the university are laid out below. The spirit of these principles is disciplinary concentration, consultation, courtesy, early communication and wherever possible, collaboration. This policy strongly supports the authority of disciplinary concentrations however it also acknowledges the complexity and importance of interdisciplinarity. Thus the final component of this policy where necessary is a robust conflict resolution strategy.

Core Principles

Disciplinary Concentration: The core principle upon which this policy is based is collegial regard for disciplinary specialisms. Discipline specialists residing in a school where a discipline is concentrated and the subject head resides should normally teach that discipline. This is also necessary to ensure appropriate oversight from specialist external examiners. *(The Head of Subject, working with the Professor(s) in the subject, supports the Head of School in assuring the highest standards with regard to the design, delivery, assessment and quality of modules and programmes in their subject (General Regulation 3.6)).*

- This particularly applies to modules where discipline fundamentals are taught.
- It is appreciated that schools may not have the capacity to meet all requests for contributions in their area of expertise. Nevertheless a school that is home to a discipline concentration should be consulted and invited to recommend or approve subject experts if they cannot provide the expertise.

Consultation: During development of new programmes/modules consideration should be given to where the disciplinary expertise lies and disciplinary experts from other schools should be involved in the design and delivery of modules within new programmes where relevant.

Courtesy: Programme changes that impact on another school should be discussed and agreed with the head of school well in advance of changes being made.

Early Communication: Programme or module changes that impact on other schools should not be made at short notice. Discussions between the relevant module coordinators and/or programme directors and/or heads of school should start a year in advance of the intended change being implemented so that

- Change implementation aligns with the annual programme board/UPB cycle for approval of programmes and with the curriculum management system (CMS) timeline.
- Schools have time to adjust to what can be significant budgetary and staff consequences.

Collaboration: Disciplines have to appreciate and be open to accommodating their host school requirements.

- A collaborative approach is encouraged along with increased engagement across schools and colleges particularly when reviewing, developing and enhancing programmes.

- Annual interaction and module review between discipline experts and the programmes they are service-teaching modules to is recommended.
- There should be openness in sharing student feedback to support programme enhancement.

Protocol for conflict resolution

Where disagreement arises and a school/subject head/module coordinator is unhappy with proposed changes

1. Local dialog and resolution

- ❖ The head of school and/or subject head and module coordinator whose module is marked for change or discontinuation should meet with the host school's programme director and head of school.
- ❖ Reasons for the change should be outlined and discussed.
- ❖ If the host school are unhappy with the module possible solutions should be discussed and agreement reached.
- ❖ If no agreement is reached a summary report is brought to the relevant College Deans/Associate Deans and Chairs of the Programme Boards.

2. Mediation by College Deans

- ❖ The relevant Deans and/or programme board chairs meet with relevant programme representatives.
- ❖ Review programme requirements of the host school.
- ❖ Determine whether the contribution of a discipline specialist would be beneficial to the host programme.
- ❖ Mediate a solution between host school and discipline experts.
- ❖ If no agreement is reached a report is sent to the Registrar requesting intervention.

3. Refer to Registrar or UMT- Education group for ultimate determination