



A meeting of the Trinity Electives Sub-Committee was held on 09 November 2022 at 10:00 am in the Arts Building Conference Room.

Present: Professor Fraser Mitchell, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE)
Ms Catherine Arnold, Education Officer, Students' Union
Dr Michael Cleary-Gaffney, Academic Affairs
Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs
Mr Shane Coultry, Academic Registry
Professor Stephen Maher, Health Sciences Representative
Professor Rachel Mc Donnell, STEM Representative
Dr Pauline Rooney, Head of Academic Practice
Professor Mark Sweetman, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture
(ADUCA)

Apologies: Professor Rachel Hoare, AHSS Representative

TESC/23-24/001 Minutes of the meeting of 07 February 2023

The minutes of the meeting of 07 February 2023 were approved.

TESC/23-24/002 Matters Arising

TESC/22-23/012 The ADUSE confirmed that the following TE proposals were approved by USC and Council and will be on offer to students in 2023-24.

- i. Inequality in the 21st Century (commencing semester 1)
- ii. Identities and Ecologies of Latin America and the Caribbean: Past, Present and Future (commencing semester 2)
- iii. Ages of Empire (commencing semester 2)

TESC/22-23/015.01 The ADUSE confirmed that the membership of the Trinity Electives Sub-Committee for 2023/24 had been approved by USC and Council.

TESC/22-23/017.01 The ADUSE confirmed that the Trinity Electives Annual Activities document, which sets out the tasks and the responsible area/unit related to Trinity Electives, was approved by USC and Council.

TESC/22-23/019.01 The ADUSE confirmed that the TE Suspension and Cessation policy had been approved by USC and Council.

TESC/23-24/003 Trinity Electives Enrolment 2023/24

i. Enrolment Data

The ADUSE brought the meeting through data on TE enrolments for 2023/24. TE modules are currently running at 73% (1757) capacity in Semester 1. Currently capacity is at 74% (1681) for Semester 2. Visiting students are yet to enrol for semester 2. The data indicated that language TEs were popular and had reached near capacity enrolment. It was noted that there was limited remaining capacity for a number of TE in Semester 2. Mr Coultry from Academic Registry informed members that the "first-come first-served" enrolment of modules worked well this year. He stated that its introduction led to the reduction of student enquiries from circa 800 enquiries to 100 enquiries.

ii. **Faculty Distribution of Students**

The ADUSE discussed that the distribution of students taking TEs across faculties. It was noted that the overall spread of students taking TEs from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) and the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) was equally spread. Members welcomed the equal distribution of enrolment across the two faculties as this was the first-year enrolment was carried out without the utilization of the algorithm, which ensured a balance of students from different faculties on each module. The equal spread of disciplines ensures that TEs adhere to Council approved principles, namely the need to ensure meaningful engagement of students from multiple disciplines. It was noted that only 52 students from the Health Sciences enrolled onto TEs and members queried whether this was due to this cohort not having the option to enrol on TEs. It was noted that the data report had a category labelled "JH" which incorporates both Joint Honours students and visiting students. Mr Coultry indicated that Academic Registry will refine this category to split out Joint Honours students and Visiting students independently. Mr Coultry noted that enrolment for visiting students attending in semester 2 will open in January 2024. Other modules that are not TEs have already been scheduled so visiting students will be able to ascertain if they can take a particular TE.

Action/Decision

Academic Registry to re-categorise the "JH" category in the "Trinity Elective Module Enrolment Distribution by Faculty (ETA1)" Power BI report to independently report Joint Honours Students and Visiting Students.

TESC/23-25/004 Trinity Elective Proposals

Post-beginners Chinese Language and Culture and Post-beginners Japanese Language and Culture

Two proposals developed by Professor Lorna Carson, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Studies were circulated to members for consideration. As the proposals had a lot of similarities, members agreed to that the commentary/feedback would be applicable to both proposals. During the discussion the following points were made:

- Members commended the proposal writer for excellent and well thought out proposals. Members acknowledged that the proposals complement the existing beginner modules and will enable students that have pre-existing exposure/knowledge/experience of the languages to be able to take these more advanced level modules.
- Some members noted that the maximum enrolment capacity was low. Other members commented that the low capacity may be due to the subject matter being of a more advanced nature and to keep the groups manageable. Others noted that the advanced nature of the subject would mean that it may only be applicable to those that had completed the language during their Leaving Certificate or had completed the introductory version of these modules. The proposals indicate that the proposed modules will run both semesters.
- Members noted that when reviewing the overall average marks of TEs that beginner language TEs typically have a higher-grade average compared to the average of non-language TEs. Members noted that this may be due to such modules having a high volume of small weighted individual continuous assessments which may contribute to higher overall grade average for the modules.
- Members noted that the assessment burden was quite high. The members noted that a student workload of 40 hours towards assessment was very high and may put student off enrolling onto the electives. Members noted that many small

weighted individual continuous assessments may contribute to higher overall grade average for the modules. Members also noted that given the high volume of assessments, reassessment in relation to the learning outcomes may be difficult to achieve. Members felt that the Programme Writer should reduce the number of smaller assessments.

- Members noted concern that 30% of the assessments were summative while 70% were formative. Members felt that these proportions should be reversed in a module of this nature.
- Members noted that most of the proposed assessments were not in the language of study. It was suggested that consideration is given to assessing students in the target language.
- A member commented that students may not understand how to use reflective writing techniques and it was suggested that students should be given clear instructions on how to write in a reflective manner. Marking rubrics should be provided to the students to enable them to succeed with this type of assessment.
- Members noted that the teaching and learning methods could appear quite vague to students and should be more specific.
- Members noted that learning outcome 3 read like two distinct learning outcomes, and that this should be split into two distinct learning outcomes. This will allow for a better alignment of assessment to the learning outcome.

Action/Decision

004.1 The ADUSE to meet with the proposal writer to convey the feedback from the committee and invite them to re-submit the amended proposals for consideration at the February 2024 meeting of the TESC.

TESC/23-24/005 Trinity Elective Draft Annual Report 2022/23

A draft of the 2022/23 Annual Report was circulated, which outlined the list of TEs offered in 2022/23, overall capacities broken down by semester and enrolments in TEs, findings from the TE student survey and the results' report. Members had no questions or comments on the Draft Annual Report. Members recommended the Annual Report to USC for approval.

Action/Decision

005.1 The TESC approved the Trinity Elective Annual Report and recommended it to USC for approval.

TESC/23-24/006 Student Evaluation

The ADUSE stated that the participation rate was quite low, ranging from 3-35% across all TEs surveys. Members noted that the low participation rate makes it difficult to obtain meaningful feedback which is generalisable. Members noted that students who participate in surveys typically are quite polarised either sharing overly positive experiences of the module or overly negative experiences. This results in it being very difficult to enact on the feedback.

Members of the committee who are academic staff and deliver TEs reported developing and administering their own survey, which are specific to their own module and provide more meaningful data to the module coordinator. Some members queried whether a centralised survey for TEs is necessary as specific use surveys tended to provide more useful feedback. The Head of Academic Practice suggested the development of a centralised survey template that all module co-ordinators could tailor accordingly for their module.

Some members noted that the importance of student's participation and engagement with the survey should be better highlighted and communicated to students. Students

should be explicitly made aware that their feedback will be acted upon, which can lead to enhancements and change. It was also noted that module coordinators should actively encourage their students to participate in the centralised survey and to communicate to how feedback will be acted upon.

Members noted that it is welcome to see that 87% of students reported enrolling onto their top two preferred TEs.

Action/Decision

006.1 The ADUSE to discuss with the Quality Officer whether the communication to students about the impact of their participation and engagement could be enhanced specifically when students are invited to participate and/or at the start of the survey.

006.2 The ADUSE to discuss with the Quality Officer whether a survey template could be created to be adapted and administered by module coordinators.

006.2 The ADUSE to communicate with TE module coordinators the importance of encouraging students to complete the centralised survey and informing students that their feedback is considered and can enact enhancements in future delivery of a module.

TESC/23-24/007 Trinity Elective policies: no change of mind & no ring-fencing of quota

Mr Coultry stated informed members that the transition from ring-fencing of TEs based on faculty to allocation based on “first-come first served” had worked well and had resulted in significantly less student enquiries to Academic Registry. The “first-come first-served” allocation to TEs has resulted in less change of mind as students are getting to enrol onto their first preference. In addition, Mr Coultry reported that the no change of mind policy implemented had worked well, which resulted in a lower volume of enquiries. A notable change this year is that students who are repeating, and those who sit reassessments can now enrol at the same time as continuing students. This means that these students are not at a disadvantage from picking only from the modules which had not reached full capacity.

Members noted that whilst students are not typically able to change the elective beyond the cut-off point, students can change their pathway later in the semester which can potentially lead to students being able to choose different TEs. Members agreed that this was a problematic issue.

Action/Decision

007.01 Members agreed to continue to implement the no ring-fencing of quota policy.

007.02: Members agreed to continue to facilitate change of mind, with a strict deadline applied beyond which changing modules will not be possible.

TESC/23-24/008 Any Other Business

- i. The ADUSE informed members that a new website entitled ratemyelective.ie had been developed which enables individuals to view and provide feedback on Trinity Electives. The Education Officer stated that their understanding of the website was that it would provide students a perspective on the module and enable them to understand the expected workload and difficulty. Members felt that in some cases the assessment strategy used in TEs may be unfamiliar to students who come from different faculties. For example, students from STEM may not be familiar writing reflective pieces which could lead to some TEs be perceived as more challenging. Some members noted that there is potential for students to choose a TE delivered in their faculty to avoid this.

However, it was noted that there was an even spread of students from the faculties of STEM and AHSS taking TEs in another faculty. The ADUSE pointed out that a small number of students were unhappy about having to take TEs outside their discipline.

Members discussed whether the need for such a website was due to the information on the Trinity Elective website not being accurate or comprehensive. The ADUSE stated that promotional videos are provided on the Trinity Elective website along with written information.

Members raised concerns about the website, in relation to negative comments being made available publicly and on the level of moderation.

- ii. Mr Shane Coultry queried whether the allocation algorithm previously used to allocate students could be retired and members agreed.

Action/Decision

008.01 The ADUSE to contact the SU President to voice the TESC's concerns about the moderation of the website.

008.02 Mr Coultry to inform IT services that the allocation algorithm can be retired.