

The University of Dublin

Trinity College

Minutes of Student Services Committee Meeting, 21st February 2006

<i>Present</i>	Dean of Students (Mr B Misstear), College Secretary (Mr M Gleeson), Senior Tutor (Dr C Laudet), Senior Lecturer (Prof C Kearney), Mr S Gannon, Ms S O'Brien, Mr R Sheridan, Deputy Treasurer (Mr I Mathews), Dr P P Walsh.
<i>Apologies</i>	Dr M Coffey, Dr A Piesse, Ms M Leahy.
<i>In attendance</i>	Ms G Conroy

SECTION A

- SS/05-06/43 Minutes** The minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2005 were approved and signed.
- SS/05-06/44 Matters Arising from the Minutes** Matters arising from the Minutes were discussed and are recorded below (see minutes **SS/05-06/45**, **SS/05-06/46**, and **SS/05-06/47**).
- SS/05-06/45 College Day Nursery** The line management of the College Day Nursery was still under consideration. All parents on the waiting list for places in the College Day Nursery had been circulated with information concerning the nearby crèche. The matter of the index linking of the College subsidy for the Nursery had been resolved and a retrospective adjustment had been made.
- SS/05-06/46 Working Party on Mental Health: Proposal for a Written Code of Practice** The working party had met on this day, and progress had been made in the drafting of a code of practice.
- SS/05-06/47 Strategic Plan for Student Services** Minor modifications had been made as discussed at the SSC meeting of 13th December 2005, as well as to Action Dates. The committee approved this process and agreed that the Plan should be presented to Board on 1 March 2006.
- SS/05-06/48 Quality Review Report for the Student Disability Service** A report from the Provost to Board on the review of the Student Disability Service had been circulated, and was presented to the committee by the College Secretary.

The overall impression of the reviewers was that the SDS was an excellent student focussed Service, which had undergone significant growth in the previous five years, and that the review had come at an opportune time. The self-assessment document had been comprehensive and well prepared, and there were many examples of good practice within the Service. The reviewers suggested that the fundamental philosophy underpinning the policies of the SDS should be more widely publicised, and that information sessions on policy and provisions should be included in induction and ongoing staff training. Procedures for course design and validation of new and existing courses should be reviewed to ensure that student needs across the range of disabilities were taken into account. Similarly, an audit of programmes of study in which CAPSL and Directors of Teaching and Learning would play a role,

was recommended, to assess the extent of inclusiveness or barriers to inclusiveness within courses. Alternative assessment procedures to complement the existing supports and accommodations at examinations should be considered by the College. The reviewers also recommended tracking the progress and success rates of students with disabilities admitted via supplementary admissions procedures by comparison with those admitted via CAO, as well as promoting and supporting disability-focused research as an additional research strategy to aid the embedding of disability awareness within the institution. Continuous professional development, and support for increased opportunities to establish and maintain links with peers both nationally and internationally should be provided for SDS staff, in particular in the light of increasing demands from emerging cohorts of students with mental health difficulties. The principles of universal design and access needed to be considered by the College in relation to the built environment, including in relation to the needs of the blind and visually impaired. A thorough process of risk assessment, in relation to the policies, practices and procedures of the SDS, needed to be undertaken as a matter of urgency. The staffing of the SDS should be considered as a matter of priority with a view to more permanent positions being established within the Service, as well as providing baseline funding in accordance with HEFCE 1999. The management structure should be given the same status as other Student Services.

The Dean of Students welcomed the positive comments of the reviewers, while expressing serious concerns about the viability of any Service without an adequate number of permanent posts, and arguing that additional permanent posts would be necessary to sustain the activities of the SDS. Commenting on the staffing numbers contained within the report, he said that the FTE number of 6 could be misinterpreted since only one staff member was permanent and five were on contract. In addition the FTE number did not distinguish between professional and support staff. The Dean welcomed the fact that a second Disability Officer post had been approved by Executive Officers in December 2005. He observed the need for proper supervision/debriefing as per the model in the Student Counselling Service, especially in the context of mental health supports. He proposed a task force to review the line management of the SDS. The committee agreed that the task force should be comprised of the College Secretary, the Dean of Students, a Board member and the current line manager (the Senior Tutor). The HEA review of funding mechanisms suggests a multiplier by 30% for this category of student, which should be taken into account by ADRAM. The Dean reminded the Committee that under the requirements of the Disability Act 2005, an integrated plan to provide access to all student areas would be required by 2007.

The Committee noted and approved the report's recommendations to Board:

- (i) that a task force be established by the Student Services Committee to review the reporting structure for the Coordinator of the Student Disability Service;
- (ii) that the College continue its inclusivity and whole institution approach to disability;
- (iii) that CAPSL, in consultation with the Student Services Committee, review the extent to which disability is taken into account in course content, teaching and assessment, and if necessary, bring forward proposals for development;
- (iv) that, through the Student Services Committee, staffing arrangements are continuously reviewed with a view to mainstreaming the Student Disability Service to the maximum extent possible;
- (v) that College continues to move to principles of universal design in the planning and development of physical facilities;
- (vi) that, in the context of overall risk management and review, the specific needs of the Service be continuously monitored, as it is likely that there will be an increasing need to accommodate persons with disability within College.

Quality Review Report for the Careers Advisory Service A report from the Provost to Board on the review of the Careers Advisory Service had been circulated, and was presented to the committee by the College Secretary. The Service had been reviewed according to criteria adapted from the framework of Reviews of Academic Departments, and tailored to assess its activities and plans for development while benefiting from a constructive commentary by senior colleagues external to College.

The overall impression of the reviewers was that the CAS was meeting an important need in its users, provided by committed, responsive and innovative staff under impressive leadership. The self-assessment document had been comprehensive and well prepared, and there were many examples of good practice within the Service. The reviewers made a number of recommendations that were summarised under the headings of service provision and education; research; resources and facilities; management and organisation.

The Dean of Students welcomed the report and concurred with the reviewers' recommendations in the main. Regarding existing staffing levels, the Dean clarified for the committee that 11.5 FTE (not 12.5 FTE) staff were employed by the CAS at the time of the review, of which three were engaged on externally funded project work, and only five were careers advisors. With respect to physical facilities, the Dean noted that the Service was spread over three locations, and that the main centre in East Chapel was not accessible to students with mobility difficulties. He indicated that there was a need to consider the consolidation of the CAS into a single campus location, and further that a physical facilities and accessibility plan should be prepared for all Student Services, in consultation with the Director of Buildings, the Bursar and other College Officers. The issue of employability was highlighted in the review report and the Dean stressed the need to increase teaching activities in areas such as communication, teamwork, time-management and other such transferable skills, in which CAS would be well placed to play a significant role. The Director (CAS) had welcomed the reviewers' statement that the Service would meet the UK Matrix Quality Standard for Careers Services, had agreed with the recommendations on employability and had expressed hope that the Committee and Board would support its strategic importance by means of the College teaching and learning policy. He stressed the need for additional resources for career-specific activities, in particular if there was to be development in the area of student placement, currently under-resourced. He agreed that the matter of accommodation needed to be addressed urgently.

The committee felt that the CAS should have a representative on the Teaching and Learning Committee, that College should provide continuing professional development, that training in transferable skills needed more embedding in the curricula, linked with learning outcomes and descriptors, and that CAS and departments should work more closely in the context of internships, acknowledging that the VACWORK programme works successfully, and that internships built into a curriculum can present significant difficulties. The Senior Lecturer observed that the comment on page.4 of the report regarding an apparent lack of readiness on the part of TCD graduates to enter the job market immediately on graduation revealed a lack of understanding of career intentions. Development in the area of post-doctoral careers should be considered.

The committee noted and approved the report's recommendations to Board:

- (a) that the Service should:
 - (i) review procedures for obtaining feedback from users and non-users;
 - (ii) consider the process for assessment of the needs of individual users of the Service;
 - (iii) review the current model for the delivery of the Personal Development Programme and assess the feasibility of greater customization and flexibility in the modes of delivery;
 - (iv) working with the Student Services Committee, keep under review the level of IT development in the area, and if appropriate make recommendations for improvement in this regard;
 - (v) consider how a longitudinal study of career progression, and the issues arising from this, and its funding, might be addressed.

- (b) that the College should:
 - (i) through CAPSL, and the Heads Committee, assess the potential for incentivization through credits or other awards, to increase the recognition and value of the Personal Development Programme for students and potential employers;
 - (ii) articulate more clearly College policy and student entitlement in regard to careers advice;
 - (iii) give a higher priority to employability issues in the context of teaching and learning; this should address how graduates are prepared for employment, and how engagement with potential employers might begin at an earlier stage than is currently the practice;
 - (iv) through the Student Services Committee, address the issues relating to the adequacy of the physical facilities, and appropriate location of the Service.

SS/05-06/50 **Estimates for 2005-2006** Introducing this item, the Deputy Treasurer drew the committee's attention to the schedules which had been circulated (the draft Estimates for 2006 and the Actual Income and Expenditure for 2005 and workings in relation to the student service charge) and he tabled the explanatory document produced by the Department of Education and Science when the student charge was introduced, as well as a letter from the HEA dated August 2002 dealing with the increase in free fees and the student service charge. He explained that since the introduction of the charge the College had engaged in a process of consultation with student representatives including meetings with the Presidents of the Students' Union and Graduate Students' Union. The Student Services Committee last year (**SS/04-05/058**) agreed that the full committee would consider resource requirements, availability and the likely implications for Services in advance of the Estimates being finalised by the Board.

The Deputy Treasurer said that the College had limited discretion both in relation to income generated by the charge, which was determined by the Minister, and in relation to the expenditure, which had to fund salary increases resulting from national pay awards as well as legislative changes such as the application of the Fixed Term Workers Act (FTWA). Turning to the draft Estimates for 2006, the Deputy Treasurer said that these had been prepared in January and had been considered by Executive Officers at their meeting on 9th February. Following review by the Finance Committee on 22nd February they would be considered by the Board on 1st March.

The Deputy Treasurer drew the committee's attention to the following points in respect of the Estimates:

- The figures excluded Targeted Initiative Funding but included provision for FTWA and for incremental salary increases.
- They included the additional staffing resources allocated by the Executive Officers in December.
- Some Services carried forward a surplus from 2005, which they could spend during 2006.
- The space costs were those associated with student activities only and reflected the results of a review by the student representatives and the Director of Buildings office during 2005.

In respect of the actual expenditure for 2005, which was based on the audited accounts for 2005 and approved by the Board in January, the Deputy Treasurer made the following point:

- The figures excluded Targeted Initiative Funding and excluded provision for FTWA, which the College had provided for centrally and where supplementary funding was being sought through the HEA.

In the discussion which followed the following points were made:

- The student representatives noted that there were significant increases in both the pay and non-pay elements estimated for Exams and Registration at a time when some student services were struggling to cope with demands. No attempt appeared to have been made to bring these costs under control. In response, the Deputy Treasurer said that the pay costs were largely pre-determined both by the staffing in place and by the application of national pay agreements. Other costs related to the hire of exam venues, printing of papers, payment to external examiners etc. While savings could be made through streamlining work processes, this often required initial investment, particularly through the use of technology. The Senior Lecturer added that the variety of subject combination choices available to students added to the cost of examinations. The forthcoming debate on modularisation and semesterisation might contribute to limiting those costs. The committee agreed that the issue of Exams and Registration costs, and the amounts that are allocated against the student charge, should be reviewed.
- The Estimates of expenditure represented the net costs of these Services. Revenue generated by some Services supported higher activity levels in those Services.
- The Dean of Students noted that the Student Services Strategic Plan 2006-2008 proposed that the additional costs of implementing priority actions should be met by allocating a higher proportion of the student charge to student services.
- The Estimates included provision for the additional staffing (including student learning support and disability) approved by the Executive Officers in December. A decision in respect of funding the other elements of the Student Services Strategic Plan is awaited.
- As the Deputy Treasurer had given the Chair and Secretary of the committee a full briefing on the 2006 Estimates and actual expenditure for 2005 in advance of the meeting, they undertook to review the detailed costs allocated against the various student services headings.

Drawing the discussion to a close, the Dean of Students thanked Mr. Mathews and his staff in the Treasurer's Office for their work in preparing the detailed information for the committee.

SS/05-06/51 Any Other Urgent Business There was no other urgent business.

Section B

There were no items in this section

Section C

SS/05-06/52 Student Disability Services Committee
The committee noted the minutes of 22nd November 2005.

Signed:

Date: