

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE**

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on **28th April 2009** at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (Chair)
Senior Lecturer, Dr Aileen Douglas
Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)
Dr Paul Delaney, School of English
Professor Ciaran Brady, School of Histories and Humanities
Dr Claire Laudet, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Dr Irene Walsh, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Dr Zuleika Rodgers, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Ms Ruth Torode, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Dr Jim Quinn, School of Business
Dr Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Dr Damian Murchan, School of Education
Professor Ivana Bacik, School of Law
Dr Kevin O'Kelly, School of Engineering
Dr Jeremy Jones, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Dr Ian Sanders, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Ignatius McGovern, School of Physics
Professor Shaun McCann, School of Medicine
Dr Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Dr Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Dr Anne Marie Healy, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Johnnie Gratton, Director of TSM
Mr Hugh Sullivan, Education Officer, Students' Union
Mr Ashley Cooke, Students' Union representative
Dr Brian Foley, Director of CAPSL
Dr Jacqueline Potter, Academic Development Manager

Apologies: Dr Simon Trezise, School of Drama, Film and Music
Dr Jacco Thijssen, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Dr Michael Lyons, School of Chemistry
Dr Daniela Zisterer, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Alan Matthews, Director of BESS
Professor Pete Coxon, Director of Science (TR071)

In attendance: Mr Trevor Peare, Dr Lorraine Leeson (for UGS/08-09/038), Ms Sorcha De Brunner

UGS/08-09/035 Minutes of the meeting of the 3rd March 2009 were approved.

UGS/08-09/036 Matters arising

(i) *UGS/08-09/011*: The Senior Lecturer noted that the Central Scholarship Committee had approved the Scholarship examination structures as provided by Schools as well as a general entry for the Foundation Scholarship section of the Calendar. She explained that the Examinations Office is now gathering final details for the examinations database. Responding to a query she confirmed that a review would take place in the future in relation to the new Scholarship examinations.

(ii) *UGS/08-09/027*: In response to a query the Academic Secretary confirmed that the Open Day is scheduled in teaching week 11 for 2009 only. Analysis will be carried out to determine relevant stakeholders' needs to establish the timing of this event in subsequent years.

(iii) *UGS/08-09/028*: The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer explained that the Higher Education Authority (HEA) has set up a Taskforce to consider up-skilling options and it is expected that a call for submissions for up-skilling will be issued to the higher education sector in the near future. He confirmed that any new course set up under these auspices would attract resources through the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) but added that in many cases additional Expert Skills funding would be required.

(iv) *UGS/08-09/030*: The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer confirmed that the revised procedure for returning a student as 'non-satisfactory' would be brought back to the next meeting for noting. Following a discussion concerning the level of evidence required for students to claim *ad misericordiam* mitigating circumstances it was generally felt that tutors should exercise their own discretion. However, it was agreed that the procedure should include wording to the effect of, 'evidence may be required', where a student claims mitigating circumstances.

UGS/08-09/037 Strategic Planning: The *Strategic Planning Framework Document (Undergraduate Teaching and Learning)*, from the Senior Lecturer, dated 23rd April 2009, was circulated.

The Senior Lecturer spoke to this item explaining that Undergraduate Teaching and Learning is one of ten themes identified for the purposes of strategic planning. She noted that the circulated document is the outcome of several meetings of the Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Strategic Planning Team, which included several Directors of Teaching and Learning (UG).

She outlined the purposes and ethos of undergraduate education and then summarised the areas of future developments identified by the Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Strategic Planning Team as:

- the maintenance of the international competitiveness of Trinity graduates both in the labour market and for admission to postgraduate education;
- the maintenance and development of the ethos and quality of undergraduate education being achieved through research-led teaching and curriculum renewal;
- the development of inter-institutional cooperation of various kinds; and
- the facilitation of the above objectives through improved coherence, transparency and flexibility in the design and operation of all aspects of undergraduate programmes.

She also outlined the goals identified to enable the attainment of the stated strategic objectives, these are:

- the implementation of the core and elective curriculum;
- the review of grading and assessment procedures;
- the articulation of current practices of research-led teaching;
- the introduction of mechanisms for curriculum renewal where these do not exist;
- the assessment of the impact of CAPSL on curriculum development;
- the development of policies and protocols governing inter-institutional cooperation, including Erasmus linked institutions, and the continued development of relationships with professional placement providers;
- the facilitation of student mobility through the review and harmonisation of programme regulations governing student progression, the full implementation of the instruments of the Bologna Process including learning outcomes at programme and module level, the routine use of the Diploma Supplement and the full implementation of the National Qualifications Framework;
- the further development of policies and strategies to extend access to students from those sections of society recognised as being under-represented at third-level;
- the continued examination of retention rates across undergraduate courses and the review of student support services in its light; and
- the implementation of a comprehensive student administration system.

She commented that although many of the goals are systems related, when examined closely, they go to the core of undergraduate teaching and learning.

The meaning of inter-institutional cooperation was queried. The Senior Lecturer explained that it encompasses joint degrees with other institutions, links with international institutions through Erasmus and links with hospitals and other professional institutions.

She confirmed that programme and module learning outcomes are to be finalised for the academic year 2010/11.

In response to a query regarding the strategic planning process the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer informed the meeting that the ten framework documents relating to the ten themes of the strategic plan are being compiled and will be sent to all Heads of Schools shortly for Schools' responses. These responses will form the basis of the overall strategic plan which requires approval from the Board of the College. Once approved, Schools will then be requested to develop and complete their own strategic plans over the summer or Michaelmas term 2009.

UGS/08-09/038 Course proposal for Bachelor in Deaf Studies: A course proposal for a *B.A. (Moderatorship) in Deaf Studies*, dated March 2009, from the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, was circulated.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, introducing the item, noted that since the circulation of the document to the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) the degree award title has been reconsidered as it is now thought that a Bachelor in Deaf Studies would be more appropriate. The Secretary to USC explained that the change in award title was being proposed due to the structure of B.A. (Moderatorship) not fitting the purpose of the course which, for the most part, is geared towards the professional training of Irish Sign Language Interpreters and of Irish Sign Language Teachers. Courses leading to the award of the B.A. (Mod.) do not allow for supplemental examinations in the final degree year and it is considered that such a regulation would not be appropriate for the course nor would it be in the best interests of the students registered to the programme.

Dr Lorraine Leeson, Director of the Centre for Deaf Studies, attended to speak to the proposal and explained that it would be the first degree course of its kind in Ireland. She explained that in many cases graduates of this degree would become Irish Sign Language Interpreters or Irish Sign Language Teachers. Currently, Ireland has approximately 50 professional Irish Sign Language interpreters. This compares to Finland, a country with a similar population, which has more than 500.

Trinity is the only existing provider of courses in Deaf Studies in Ireland. Currently there are three separate diplomas offered. These are Deaf Studies, Irish Sign Language/English Interpreting and Irish Sign Language Teaching. The Centre for Deaf Studies has received numerous enquiries about offering a degree programme and following research best practice suggests that a four-year degree programme should be provided.

Under the proposed programme the first two years are common to all students registered to the course. Students can exit at the end of the Senior Freshman year with a Diploma in Deaf Studies if they do not wish to proceed to the Sophister years. There are three strands available in the Sophister years allowing students to concentrate on one of Deaf Studies, Irish Sign Language Interpreting or Irish Sign Language Teaching. Training in these areas, especially in interpreting, should help to increase the participation of deaf and hard of hearing students in third-level education. Currently only 2% of the undergraduate population in Ireland is comprised of deaf students.

Responding to a number of queries, she confirmed that there are promising discussions taking place in relation to future premises for the Centre of Deaf Studies. She commented that the proposed cohort is similar in size to established courses in the United Kingdom and that there were also five additional places available in the Junior Sophister year to allow diploma holders to return to complete the degree. She advised that adequate library resources had been built-up in the Centre for Deaf Studies and that students would be able to access linguistics texts from the main Library. The provision of supports in academic English had been previously planned but had to be cut from the proposal due to a reduction in funding under the second cycle of the Strategic Innovation Fund. Alternative methods to support students in this area are being examined.

In response to a query from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, she confirmed that there was a course director in place and a course committee would be established. She

noted in response to a query on international students, that there was interest from American students.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Director of the Centre for Deaf Studies for speaking to the proposal and the Director withdrew from the meeting.

The Director of Teaching and Learning (UG) from the School of Linguistic Speech and Communication Sciences added that the School supports the course proposal fully and expects the degree to fit well within the School. She noted the level of work put into developing the proposal and the enthusiasm of the Director of the Centre for Deaf Studies. She confirmed that further work is being carried out to develop the learning outcomes and commented that the proposal was very well received by the external reviewer.

The meeting welcomed the course proposal and recommended it to Council subject to the further development of its learning outcomes.

UGS/08-09/039 Access Plan 2009-2013: The draft *University of Dublin, Trinity College Access Plan 2009-2013*, dated April 2009, was circulated.

The Senior Lecturer spoke to the item explaining that the HEA has published its *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013*. Through this document institutions have been asked to report on the range of access supports, activities and resources available internally and to indicate how these can be further developed as well as setting increased targets for the participation of students from under-represented sections of society. The document presented to the USC is thus a hybrid of a report and a plan and is a product of several meetings of the Working Group on Trinity's Access Plan which was set up in Michaelmas term 2008. The plan articulates the importance placed on equity of access in Trinity, it states:

'Trinity College Dublin is committed to developing the diversity and inclusiveness of its student body. The College facilitates access to its programmes by students from under-represented groups, and by mature students, through its outreach activities, its foundation courses, and through its operation of alternative admissions routes. The College maintains a range of student services so as to support students appropriately during their academic careers, and to aid them in the successful completion of their course.'

The HEA has provided information on the levels of students from under-represented groups in higher education at present. 24% of new entrants access third-level education through non-standard routes of entry. 18% of entrants to all full and part-time courses are mature students. In view of these existing figures the HEA has specified sectoral targets of:

- 30% access to third-level by key access groups by non-standard admission routes;
- mature students will comprise 27% full-time and part-time entrants by 2013;
- under-represented socio-economic groups: entry rates of 42% (non-manual) and 45% (semi- and unskilled manual);
- the number of students in higher education with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities to be doubled.

To contribute to these sectoral targets, it is proposed that Trinity sets the following targets:

- 22% entrance rates according to key access criteria;
- 13% of new entrance rates by under-represented socio-economic groups;
- 11% new entrants in Engineering, Mathematics and Science;
- 10% increase in students with a disability (excluding specific learning difficulties).

She advised that Trinity is not in a position to achieve these targets without the delivery of continuing supports promised in the HEA's *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013*.

The Academic Secretary clarified that the target of 22% of entrance rates according to key access criteria relates to the overall number of new entrants. Trinity's current target of 15%, which has been consistently reached, is mainly comprised of mature students. The Director of Teaching and Learning (UG) in the School of Medicine noted that very few students come into medicine through access routes.

The Senior Lecturer noted a number of difficulties in the compilation of information for the purpose of this document. These included a lack of clear definitions of target groups at a sectoral level and a lack of centralised reliable data in Trinity concerning students from under-represented groups, including their usage of student services and learning supports.

The Director of CAPSL commented that the funding position of part-time students is a fundamental issue which must be addressed by the HEA. He also expressed reservations in relation to the recommendation that Trinity might consider varying its matriculation requirements for courses in the areas of engineering, mathematics and science, specifically for those eligible to apply through modified points schemes. Namely, such students would only be required to present three or four Leaving Certificate subjects most directly pertinent to the courses to which they are applying. He stated that Engineering graduates are expected to think critically, communicate effectively and work in varying multi-disciplinary settings. Students presenting in only three or four technical subjects in the Leaving Certificate would be at a distinct disadvantage in relation to fellow students. He suggested that such a development would be contrary to the spirit of the Broad Curriculum.

The Senior Lecturer responding stated that such a development would provide a point of entry which would allow disadvantaged students to participate in courses in the areas of engineering, mathematics and science. However, it was questioned whether they would be able to engage fully with the curricula in these courses if admitted to College lacking certain subjects.

The Academic Secretary pointed out that a number of students cannot avail of certain subjects at second-level nor can they afford grinds to help boost their Leaving Certificate results. Potential students, strong in mathematics and science subjects are possibly being lost to Trinity College because they are weaker in other areas. Rather than removing this recommendation completely, it was agreed that the wording should be amended to reflect that research should take place to look at the possibility of varying the matriculation requirements for such students.

The creation of the position of an Academic Liaison Officer in each School was discussed fully. It was commented that a number of Schools are already finding it difficult to fill existing roles from the pool of available staff. The Senior Lecturer noted that the Working Group did not recommend that it should be a stand alone position and that it could be held by an existing post-holder such as the Head of Discipline. She stressed the need for points of contact within the academic community at School level for staff in access areas such as the Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) and the Disability Service. Such a development would also facilitate the flow of information back to areas such as TAP and the Disability Service in terms of the academic needs and requirements of the College Community. Such reciprocal communication is often missing in College and is acting as a barrier to entry and retention of students from disadvantaged areas. Some schools have separate liaison officers for TAP and the Disability Service. A broader formal Academic Liaison Officer role would cut out on this duplication, would help clarify academic issues and would help to foster closer links with access areas and academic units in College.

There was general support for the creation of a role of an Academic Liaison Officer in each school to sit on the School Executive under the proviso that Schools should be free to nominate the most appropriate post holder. In some cases this will be the Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate). The dissent of the Director of Teaching and Learning (UG) from the School of Business was noted to this recommendation.

The *Trinity College Access Plan 2009-2013* was recommended to Council subject to recommendations five and ten reading:

Recommendation Five

Progression – Alternative Admissions Routes

That research be undertaken to look at the feasibility of reviewing Trinity College Dublin's admissions policy in terms of varying the matriculation requirements for undergraduate courses in mathematics, science and engineering, specifically for candidates who are eligible to apply to College through modified points schemes. Matriculation requirements

for these candidates could be reduced to consist of the required grade in three or four leaving certificate subjects most directly pertinent to the area of study.

Recommendation Ten

The post of Academic Liaison Officer (ALO) should be created within Schools, the holder of which should sit on the School Executive. The functions of the ALO post to include:

- Raising awareness of access issues and activities
- Providing a clear point of contact within academic units for those working in the access area
- Bringing perspectives relating to access to Schools' considerations of curricular reform.

UGS/08-09/040 Undergraduate Teaching Analysis: A memorandum, *Draft Undergraduate Teaching Analysis 2007-08*, dated 28th April 2009, from the Academic Secretary, was circulated.

The Academic Secretary introduced this item and outlined a number of challenges faced in the compilation of this information. These included the lack of responses from some Schools, incomplete returns, the inconsistency in use of the timetabling system (CMIS), incomplete or inaccurate information being inputted into CMIS and the lack of functionality to flag certain types of teaching on the system such as Senior Sophister dissertation supervision.

Despite the difficulties faced in the collation of this information, she referred the meeting to draft summary data concerning the undergraduate teaching analysis for 2007/08. She also drew the attention of the committee to the analysis specifically concerning the number of professors teaching on undergraduate courses and noted that there were 14 Professors and 9 Associate Professors for which she received no information. She commented that she is working with the Staff Office to gain further information about professors, if any, who do not teach. It is possible that a number of these 'missing' professors are on sabbatical leave. She further commented that the data presented still required work to be carried out to ensure its reliability.

It was noted that 29% of teaching was not carried out by professors, associate professors, senior lecturers or lecturers. However, it was also noted that it is desirable that postgraduate students gain experience through the delivery of tutorials. The Education Officer of the Students' Union commented that it would be useful to see a breakdown of Teaching Assistants in terms of those who deliver lectures.

The Academic Secretary noted that following further work to include missing information, and following further verifications, the data would be brought back to the next meeting of the USC before it is presented to Council.

UGS/08-09/041 Annual Examinations 2009: A memorandum, *Examination Timetable 2009*, dated 22nd April 2009, from the Academic Secretary, was circulated with an attached report from the SAS User Support Unit Manager and the Examinations and Timetabling Officer (Acting), dated 15th April 2009.

The Academic Secretary spoke to the item explaining that a number of logistical problems arose in relation to the scheduling of the 2009 annual examinations for a variety of reasons, which included:

- an increase in the number of examination events;
- an increase in the range of examination times;
- examination information not matching course structures;
- incorrect information being returned in relation to examinations;
- the sharing of the same examination events across a number of courses and standings; and
- the late enrolment of students to optional modules.

She noted that the annual examination timetable is likely to become more complex with the introduction of modularisation and in this regard College must consider if it needs to extend the examination period or reassess existing examination policies to ensure that all examinations can be scheduled within the current four week period.

The issues highlighted in the report were discussed and comments were made in relation to optimising the number of examinations held over the examination period, the possibility of looking at other modes of assessment as an alternative to the proliferation of examinations and the difficulties faced by students taking two examinations in one day.

The Senior Lecturer commented that the circulated report was a very informative and useful document. She asked the Directors of Teaching and Learning (UG) to discuss the document within their Schools so that comments may be brought back to a future meeting of USC.

UGS/08-09/042 Calendar Changes

a) General Regulations

The attention of the meeting was drawn to the timing of the deadline for students who wished to transfer course under the second tier of transfers. The Secretary to USC explained that in the current year this deadline is specified as the end of the first week of the Hilary teaching term, which allows students a period of reflection over the Christmas break to consider if they are on the right programme. Under the new academic year structure the first week of Hilary term falls later in the teaching year and it is proposed that the deadline be set at the end of the eighth week of the Michaelmas term to allow the period of reflection to coincide with the study week.

The deadline for applications for re-admission for Junior Freshmen students withdrawing after the 1st February was compared with the deadline for Junior Freshmen students allowed to go off the books after the 1st February and the difference was queried. The Secretary to USC undertook to follow up with the Admissions Officer on this point.

b) Additional TSM Changes: Junior and Senior Sophister, Pattern B, Examination Regulations

The committee noted the changes to the TSM regulations, as presented.

c) Course entry for Political Science and Geography

It was commented that the Calendar entry for the new course in Political Science and Geography was too ambiguous for students and would require substantial changes. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that once the entry was clarified with the disciplines involved it would be circulated to the Committee for noting.

He commented that in future new course proposals should be accompanied by their corresponding Calendar entry.

d) Course entry for Deaf Studies

The committee noted the entry for the new degree course in Deaf Studies, as presented.

UGS/08-09/043 Any other business: There was no other business.

UGS/08-09/044 TAP Steering Committee: The USC noted and approved the minutes of the TAP Steering Committee of the 25th March 2009.

UGS/08-09/045 Items for noting: The USC noted the following document circulated for information:
(i) Memorandum, *Summary report on the Diploma Supplement*, dated 21st April 2009, from the Bologna Desk.

signature

date