

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 16th November 2010 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Senior Lecturer, Dr Aileen Douglas (*Chair*)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)
Dr Simon Trezise, School of Drama, Film and Music
Dr Philip Coleman, School of English,
Dr Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities
Dr Eleanor Denny, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Ms Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Dr Jim Quinn, School of Business
Dr Michael Gormley, School of Psychology
Dr Oran Doyle, School of Law
Dr Dermot O'Dwyer, School of Engineering
Dr Ian Sanders, School of Natural Sciences
Dr Stefan Hutzler, School of Physics
Professor Graeme Watson, School of Chemistry
Dr Clair Gardiner, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Shaun McCann, School of Medicine
Dr Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Dr Catherine McCabe, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Dr Anne Marie Healy, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Johnnie Gratton, Director of TSM
Dr Brian Foley, Director of CAPSL
Ms Jennifer Fox, Education Officer, Students' Union
Ms Rachel Barry, Student Representative

Apologies: Pro-Vice Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Professor Michael Marsh
Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
Dr Rachel Hoare, 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
Dr Conor McGuckin, School of Education
Dr Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Dr Francis O'Toole, Director of BESS
Professor Pete Coxon, Director of Science (TR071)

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Mr Trevor Peare and Professor Brian Singleton (UGS/10-11/012)

The Senior Lecturer welcomed Dr Oran Doyle, acting Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) in the School of Law, to the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC). She explained that the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer has stepped aside from his role following his announcement that he would participate in the election for Provost; Professor Michael Marsh has been appointed Pro-Vice-Provost. She also noted that Council and Board had approved the recommendation from the Review Taskforce that the Senior Lecturer should chair the USC.

UGS/10-11/010 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 12th October 2010 were approved.

UGS/10-11/011 Matters arising

- (i) *UGS/10-11/002(i)* Responding to a query, the Director of the Centre for Academic Development and Student Learning (CAPSL) noted that site visits are being conducted to view a number of virtual learning environments (VLEs) in use in other

- institutions. A decision, in relation to the successful bid, is anticipated before Christmas with implementation due to commence as soon as possible thereafter.
- (ii) *UGS/10-11/005* The Senior Lecturer noted that the second round of vendor presentations for the new student administration system took place earlier in November and that members of USC had been invited to attend.
 - (iii) *UGS/10-11/006* The Senior Lecturer advised that Study Group International had visited TCD in November. Course details for the foundation year will be forwarded shortly and relevant schools will be contacted in this regard.
 - (iv) *UGS/10-11/008* A member commented that the policy in relation to student evaluations occurring not below the module level was unfair and it was suggested that Council re-visit its policy on this matter. The Senior Lecturer and Director of CAPSL explained that this is not just a matter of policy. Since there is only one staff member dedicated to the function it is also a matter of capacity; student evaluations at sub-module levels cannot currently be facilitated. The dissatisfaction of the School of Physics was noted.

UGS/10-11/012 Proposal for course in Stage Management and Technical Theatre

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A proposal for a new undergraduate diploma in Stage Management and Technical Theatre, dated 9th November 2010, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer welcomed Professor Brian Singleton to the meeting to speak to the proposal.

Professor Singleton noted that this course proposal concerns one of three programmes to be offered by The Lir, National Academy of Dramatic Art, the others being the Bachelor in Acting (Hons.) and the Masters in Fine Art. All courses are related to practical training for the theatre and associated industries. The course in Stage Management and Technical Theatre has been designed by the School of Drama, Film and Music in consultation with the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) and with various consultative fora comprising professionals in the field. He noted that whilst the award title has yet to be confirmed the programme will lead to a level eight qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications.

He advised that there is a shortage of trained professionals in Ireland in this field and that RADA reports a near 100% employment rate for graduates of a similar course delivered in the UK. Progression to postgraduate studies is facilitated since successful students would receive a level eight qualification. He noted that this course dovetails neatly with the Bachelor in Acting (Hons.), previously approved by USC, in that students on this course would be required to manage the technical aspects of productions staged by students on the Acting course.

In response to a number of queries he commented that the Cathal Ryan Trust is funding a resource room which would stock key texts; students will spend the majority of their time based in The Lir, therefore, it is unlikely that they will occupy Library space; a certificate of medical fitness is required for new entrants since the course is physically demanding, often requiring students to climb ladders and carry equipment; and the proposal does not concern validation as the programme would be a full Trinity College course. He undertook to discuss Library considerations with the Library Representative and the Senior Lecturer commented that the proposal should reference other student services.

The Senior Lecturer thanked Professor Singleton for attending USC to present the course proposal.

The USC recommended the proposal to Council subject to minor amendments based on the discussion of the item.

UGS/10-11/013 Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2009/10 (Draft)

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The 'Draft Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2009/10', dated November 2010, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer noted that this is the first year that a draft version of the report had been circulated to USC prior to Council. She advised that the report provides an overview of undergraduate education in College and provides useful data to contextualise many items discussed at USC.

She highlighted data from the report in relation to first preference applications; the number of entrance exhibitions awarded; the number of entrants coming through access

routes; data from the New Entrants Survey; retention; increases in the number of examination appeals brought by students; the number of first class degrees and Gold Medals awarded; the number of Foundation Scholarship candidates and awards; and the Learning Outcomes project.

A discussion ensued in relation to retention and the Students' Union Education Officer commented that many undergraduate students withdraw from College due to the course not matching their expectations. She stressed the importance of having clear information about courses in the Undergraduate Prospectus and on websites. Another member commented that it would be useful to see retention data concerning students admitted to College through access routes as there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that a significant proportion of mature students withdraw.

The USC welcomed the draft report.

UGS/10-11/014 Review of Gold Medal Criteria

A memorandum, 'Review of Gold Medal Criteria', from the Senior Lecturer, dated 11th November 2010, was circulated. Speaking to the memorandum she noted that the Working Group on Grade Point Average had recommended that:

- (i) USC should discuss the nature of achievement deserving a Gold Medal and Schools should articulate what constitutes a gold medal performance for each degree award.
- (ii) Schools should review their current award criteria for gold medals bearing in mind that the marking scale approved in College is up to 100%.

She commented that the high level of curriculum reform in recent years had led to an increase in the number of modules taken by students each year. Gold medal criteria must be considered in this context especially where current criteria require that a first is achieved in each module. She advised that Schools, Disciplines and Course Committees, in reviewing their criteria, should articulate what gold medals means in terms of performance.

The discussion covered the following aspects:

- there were differing views as to whether gold medals be awarded based on absolute versus relative criteria, in other words to the top one or two students in graduating cohorts or to truly exceptional students achieving grades over a certain percentage;
- it was commented by some that it was not realistic for students, taking in excess of ten modules, to receive a first class result in each module;
- The term 'papers' is outmoded and should be changed to 'module' to reflect the use of other forms of assessment and composite marks;
- The effect of marking up to 100% would mean that 73% would become quite modest and would have to be raised.
- Since degrees are awarded on an absolute scale it would be inconsistent to award gold medals on a relative scale.

The Senior Lecturer advised members that the Examinations and Timetables Officer would be in touch shortly in relation to this item.

UGS/10-11/015 Undergraduate Studies Committee Self-evaluation Survey

An analysis of responses to the 'Undergraduate Studies Committee Self-Evaluation Survey October 2010', dated 20th October 2010, was circulated.

Speaking to the item, Ms De Brunner noted that, following the example of other committees, a self-evaluation of USC was conducted in early October 2010, which covered the operation of the committee during 2009/10. Given the changes in membership this academic year the questionnaire was distributed to members who served in 2009/10. She commented that 11 members completed the survey, therefore, it is not clear that the scores represent the whole committee. She highlighted that the overall results indicate respondents were happy with the performance of USC, however, there are some areas which did not score as highly as others, these are:

- monitoring and reviewing of quality assurance and improvement measures;
- communication between the USC and the wider College community;
- considering and advising on the Bologna process;
- clarity as to the relationship of USC to Council.

The Senior Lecturer commented that there is consonance with some of the findings of the Board self-evaluation especially on the issue of communication. The Senior Lecturer thanked Ms De Brunner for summarising the findings of the self-evaluation survey.

UGS/10-11/016 Mathematical (Log) Tables for Examinations

A memorandum 'Mathematical (Log) Tables for Examinations', from the Senior Lecturer, dated 11th November 2010, was circulated.

Speaking to her memorandum she commented that this item was being raised at USC to provide the Examinations Office with clarity in relation to the purchasing and distribution of the new version of Mathematical 'Log' Tables. Whilst it is clear that new entrants are familiar with the new version, continuing cohorts are not. Following a full discussion of the matter the committee agreed that all students should familiarise themselves with the new version of the mathematical tables and this version should be provided, as standard, in examination venues. However, a small number of the old version of the tables should be made available in examination venues, which students can request if they wish. In such situations it was noted that both versions would have to be listed on the front page of relevant examination papers.

UGS/10-11/017 Any other business

- (i) In relation to the additional revision week ahead of the annual examinations a member commented that some schools and courses are finding it difficult to schedule exam boards and appeal courts before the end of statutory term, especially as the number of examinations has increased with the move towards modularisation.
- (ii) It was commented that Broad Curriculum modules available for 2010/11 had not been finalised until August, which was later than in previous years. The Senior Lecturer advised that she would raise this matter with those administering the Broad Curriculum.

UGS/01-11/018 Items for noting

The USC noted the following documents circulated for information:

- (i) Memorandum, 'Podcasting of Junior Fresh Lectures', from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, dated 26th October 2010.
- (iii) Document 'Progress on the Implementation of Online Student Evaluations', from the Director of CAPSL, dated 26th October 2010.

signature

date