

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 22nd May 2012 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Senior Lecturer, Dr Patrick Geoghegan (*Chair*)
Dean of Students, Dr Amanda Piesse
Assistant Academic Secretary, Ms Orla Sheehan
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)
Dr Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music
Dr Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities
Dr Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Dr Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Dr Benjamin Wold, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Professor David Coghlan, School of Business
Dr Michael Gormley, School of Psychology
Dr Michael Shevlin, School of Education
Dr Oran Doyle, School of Law
Dr Dermot O'Dwyer, School of Engineering
Dr Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Dr Stefan Hutzler, School of Physics
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
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 Moray McGowan, Director of TSM
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Ms Rachel Barry, Education Officer, Students' Union

Apologies: Dr Philip Coleman, School of English
Dr Paul O'Grady, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Ms Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Dr David Chew, School of Natural Sciences
Dr Wolfgang Schmitt, School of Chemistry
Dr Clair Gardiner, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Dr Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
Dr Francis O'Toole, Director of BESS
Mr Daniel Ferrick, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner; Mr Trevor Peare (Library Representative); Civic Engagement Officer, Ms Róisín McGrogan (for item UGS/11-12/068).

UGS/11-12/065 Minutes

The minutes of the 17th April 2012 were approved.

UGS/11-12/066 Matters arising

- (i) UGS/11-12/060: The Senior Lecturer noted that the proposals related to the harmonisation of assessment and progression regulations were approved by Council. He reported that Council looked forward to discussing broader issues in new academic year, such as recommendations arising from the recent forums on assessments.
- (ii) UGS/11-12/061: The Senior Lecturer noted that the proposal for the Moderatorship in Catholic Theological Studies had been reviewed by two external assessors following the discussion at USC. Both viewed the proposal positively and the new course was subsequently approved at Council. He also

noted that the new strand in Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, which had been discussed at USC on 20th March, had been approved by Council.

UGS/11-12/067 Senior Lecturer's update

- (i) **Assessment Forums:** The Senior Lecturer noted that the three assessment forums, which were facilitated by Dr Ciara O'Farrell of CAPSL, had been very well attended and had generated a number of good ideas for further consideration. Dr O'Farrell hopes to organise a related symposium to be held in the next academic year. The Senior Lecturer commented that he intends to present a paper on the topic at the first meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee of the new academic year, and bring recommendations forward to Council. He advised the meeting that the message from the forums which resonated most strongly was that staff should be trusted to set appropriate assessments for their students. He was impressed by the level of engagement with the issue of how staff members teach and assess, and the wider question of how Trinity can provide the best educational experience for students. He commented that his paper will consider how College can best support and encourage innovation in teaching and assessment.
- (ii) **Admissions and Curriculum Conference:** The Senior Lecturer commented that the conference on admissions and curriculum took place on 18th May and had been very well attended with representatives from other universities, the institutes of technology, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Higher Education Authority (HEA), Central Applications Office (CAO) and the Department of Education and Skills (DES) amongst others, with the new Secretary General of the DES, Mr Seán Ó Foghlú, providing the opening welcome and address. The event showed the education sector that Trinity is engaging with the matter of admissions and is prepared to show leadership in the area. He advised that the proceedings had been filmed and would be available on the Undergraduate Studies website shortly; he noted that there had been a significant number of visitors to the site in the lead-up to the event, again reflecting the large interest in the subject.

Despite the many successes of the conference, he advised that it seemed clear at the event, and in discussions afterwards, that the DES intends to adhere to the recommendations put forward in the NCCA/HEA report, 'From Transaction to Transition: Outcomes of the Conference on the Transition from Second to Third-Level Education in Ireland' which was published in December 2011. Such recommendations include the introduction of a generic skills based first year curriculum, a reduction in the granularity of grades achievable in the Leaving Certificate examinations, graduate entry to courses like Medicine and Law and a reduction in the number of undergraduate courses for entry purposes. However, he noted that there is uncertainty as to whether the NCCA/HEA document constitutes government policy.

The Committee discussed the various recommendations and their likely effects in Trinity and across the sector. It was commented that it would be useful for a working group to be set up to examine some of the wider issues arising out of the conference but that College should not formally consider the implementation of the NCCA/HEA's recommendations since these have not been officially communicated as policy.

- (iii) **Entrants from Northern Ireland:** The Senior Lecturer noted that College is exploring the possibility of putting in place student ambassadors to promote Trinity College across all 32 counties of the island of Ireland. This will assist in promoting the institution and show that Trinity is interested in attracting students from all across the country; it should also help to attract more entrants from Northern Ireland.

UGS/11-12/068 Talloires Declaration**XX**

A memorandum from the Civic Engagement Officer, 'Talloires Declaration', to the Senior Lecturer, dated 16th May 2012, was circulated along with the Talloires Declaration, dated 17th September 2005. The memorandum outlined that College is committed to much of the work supported by the declaration, which refers to higher education institutions using '...the processes of education and research to respond to, serve and strengthen its communities for local and global citizenship', having a responsibility '...to participate actively in the democratic process and to empower those who are less privileged' and '...to build a culture of reflection and action by faculty, staff and students that infuses all learning and inquiry'.

The Senior Lecturer welcomed the Civic Engagement Officer, Ms Róisín McGrogan, to the meeting to talk to the item. The Civic Engagement Officer advised that by joining the Talloires Network, College would further its aims in relation to civic engagement, as set out in the 'Strategic Plan 2009-2014'. Such a development would also show that College is working towards fulfilling one of the three core roles highlighted in the 'National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030', otherwise known as the 'Hunt Report', that of engagement with society. She noted that by signing the Talloires Declaration Trinity would demonstrate, on an international platform, that it is committed to such engagement.

Responding to queries, the Civic Engagement Officer advised that joining the Network would not incur additional costs and would not require College to add to its commitments in this area. She advised that Council had endorsed the 'First Report on Civic Engagement in Trinity College Dublin' in April 2011. Consequently, the Civic Engagement Officer post has been retained and a pilot is due to commence next year whereby community organisations can put forward research ideas for dissertation topics.

USC endorsed the continued involvement in the area of civic engagement and recommended that the Provost should sign the Talloires Declaration.

UGS/11-12/069 Bachelor in Education curricula revisions**XX**

A joint covering letter from the Principal of the Church of Ireland College of Education and the President of the Marino Institute of Education, dated 17th May 2012, was circulated accompanied by a proposal, from each institution, outlining curriculum changes to the courses Education, dated April 2012 and May 2012, respectively.

The Senior Lecturer informed the meeting that proposals concern curriculum changes to the Bachelor in Education courses run in the two Colleges of Education, which are validated by the University of Dublin. Up to now, the Bachelor in Education has been structured as a three year ordinary degree course, with an additional honors year. Due to changing Teaching Council requirements, the validated courses have been restructured as integrated four year honors programmes. The Senior Lecturer advised that the proposals have already been considered by the Associated Colleges Degree Committee (ACDC), which is responsible for quality assurance in relation to validated courses delivered by the Colleges of Education, and it was decided that the changes should also be considered by USC. In response to a query about the effectiveness of the quality assurance mechanisms, the Senior Lecturer advised that the ACDC is rigorous in its work, it is chaired by the Registrar and its members include the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Senior Lecturer, and representatives from the School of Education and from the Colleges of Education.

USC recommended the proposals to Council subject to the receipt of a positive external assessment.

UGS/11-12/070 International Exchanges

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, 'International Student Exchanges', dated 17th May 2012, was circulated with attached data concerning the number of students coming to, and going out from, College on Erasmus and other international exchanges.

The Senior Lecturer, introducing his memorandum, asked the meeting about the feasibility of increasing the number of students going out on Erasmus and other exchanges. A number of comments were made by members in the discussion of the item, which included:

- financing a period abroad is a significant concern for students;
- there can be a lack of clear information available for students, for example, the volume of credits which must be taken whilst abroad;
- students do not always get a place at their preferred institution;
- it would be helpful if the Foundation Scholarship emoluments could be used flexibly by Scholars who go out on an international exchange;
- there are significantly larger numbers of students coming into College than those going out, which represents a cost to College;
- a number of schools already send out a large number of students on international exchanges, especially where their degree courses include a foreign language, and it would not be possible to increase the proportion on these;
- students going out from Trinity are limited by the lack of an additional language, whereas, English speaking universities tend to receive a large number of incoming students;
- some exchanges must be funded through particular schools as the period of exchange is not long enough to qualify for Erasmus funding, for example, in the School of Pharmacy
- coordinating international exchanges is very resource intensive;
- standards and course emphasis differ across institutions; and
- course structures can limit the opportunity to go out on international exchanges.

The Senior Lecturer thanked members for their comments and noted that there would be a coordinated approach taken on this matter as part of the Global Relations Strategy.

UGS/11-12/071 USC membership

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A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, 'Revised Undergraduate Studies Committee Membership', dated 17th May 2012, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer introduced his memorandum noting that the membership of the Senior Tutor, on USC, had been discussed at Council.

Following a brief discussion of the item USC endorsed the inclusion of the Senior Tutor as a member of the Committee and recommended that there be a review of the membership in the coming academic year.

UGS/11-12/072 Any other business

- (i) The Senior Lecturer noted that there would be an additional meeting of USC before the end of the statutory term. The Secretary to USC confirmed that this was to approve Calendar changes, the process for which had been delayed this year due to the activities around the harmonisation of assessment and progression regulations.
- (ii) The Senior Lecturer thanked those Committee members who were stepping down at the end of the academic year.

UGS/11-12/073 Trinity Access Programmes Steering Committee

The draft minutes of the meeting of 29th March were noted and approved.

signature

date