

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 11th September 2012 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

- Present: Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Patrick Geoghegan (*Chair*)
Dean of Students, Professor Amanda Piesse
Senior Tutor, Professor Clare Laudet
Assistant Academic Secretary, Ms Orla Sheehan
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)
Professor Mary Lee Rhodes, School of Business
Professor Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music
Professor Jarlath Killeen, School of English
Professor Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Pádraig de Paor, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Ivana Bacik, School of Law
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor Benjamin Wold, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Professor Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Ken Mok, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor David Chew, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Graham Harper, School of Physics
Professor Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Professor Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Francis O'Toole, Director of BESS
Professor Moray McGowan, Director of TSM
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Mr Daniel Ferrick, Education Officer, Students' Union
Ms Sinead Leydon, Student Representative
- Apologies: Professor Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, School of Chemistry
Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Professor Eleanor Denny, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Secretary to USC
- In attendance: Ms Alison Doyle, Disability Service, for UGS/12-13/008
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The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies opened this first meeting of the 2012/2013 academic year by introducing new members of the committee and welcoming back those continuing to serve.

SECTION A

USC/12-13/001 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 26th June 2012 were approved.

USC/12-13/002 **Matters arising**

- (i) UGS/11-12/077: The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that, as agreed, a standing committee of both the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Graduate Studies Committee had met during the Summer Session to consider issues arising from the implementation of GeneSIS. The two meetings, chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies, had been very productive and their minutes were circulated with the papers for this meeting.

- (ii) UGS/11-12/078: A meeting of the Scholarship Review Working Group is scheduled for 21 September 2012. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies will present a number of proposals for consideration by the group with the intention that a report should come to the next meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee. In formulating proposals the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies has been guided by the principle of fairness and consistency for all candidates sitting the Scholarship Examination and has been informed by earlier reports (1985 and 2008).

USC/12-13/003 **Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies's update**

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Further to the project started in 2012/13 on alternative criteria for admission to undergraduate courses, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies is consulting with a small number of schools which would be prepared to allocate a limited number of places using supplementary assessment methods in addition to Leaving Certificate results on, for example, a total of three courses. A proposal will be brought to this Committee, and then to Council, for a feasibility study to test this new admissions route in 2014. Details of the feasibility study, and its results, will be shared with other universities so as to aid the discussion on admissions across the sector.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies recently visited the United States and used the opportunity for informal conversations with Harvard, Princeton, Yale and the University of Chicago about their admissions policies. While some use proficiency in other areas, for example music or sport, as one of the criteria, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies was impressed by the approach taken by Harvard which uses academic excellence as the critical benchmark. However, where it differs from Trinity is that it uses more than one metric to assess that excellence. The challenge is to find another measure to judge academic ability and potential and one that does not benefit those applicants that are already advantaged; for example by their secondary school or attendance at 'grinds'. There was some concern expressed, for example, about the effectiveness of interviews which are resource-intensive, unreliable and do not have public confidence. The meeting noted that additional metrics may be course-specific rather than uniform.

There was a brief discussion about whether universities should become involved in the reform of the second-level sector - recognising that general education is not just a points race but should produce well-educated individuals who can make a contribution at all levels of society. The influence that universities brought in raising the importance of mathematics was noted and how increasing the points allocated for that subject in the Leaving Certificate influenced school provision and student choice. There may be some merit in considering a similar approach to other subjects.

USC/12-13/004 **Undergraduate Studies Committee Work Programme 2012/13**

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In addition to the usual business of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies proposes, in a memo circulated with the papers, that it should focus its work in 2012/13 in 'defining, articulating and finding policies to support the concept of the Trinity Education in the undergraduate curriculum.' He sees this as an opportunity to identify what Trinity is doing well, what can be improved upon and what is still to be achieved. As a first step he had identified some questions that might be addressed:

- a A University for the Island of Ireland: can we do more to encourage able students from across the island of Ireland to apply to Trinity, and can we work to ensure that our admissions policies identify and admit students with the academic ability and potential to thrive at Trinity?
- b A Research-Based Education: what do we mean by this, and how can we ensure its delivery?
- c The Trinity Curriculum: do we have a genuinely broad curriculum across all four years of undergraduate study; do we support outward student mobility?

- d The Trinity Experience: how can we support learning outside of the classroom as well as inside it; do we ensure a positive first-year experience for students as they transition from second-level; do we support extra- and co-curricular activities?
- e The Attributes of the Graduate: what are the key attributes we are trying to develop through our curriculum, and how do we ensure that the curriculum genuinely supports their development?
- f Assessments: do our assessments match our educational objectives, and can we do more to encourage innovation in our teaching, learning and assessment strategies?
- g Examinations: as the demands on our students change do we need to re-examine certain issues, for example, the issue of supplemental examinations in the Junior Sophister year?
- h Innovation: can we do more in the area of online course delivery, e-learning and providing opportunities for lifelong learning?
- i Excellence: can we do more to ensure that academic members of staff are encouraged, supported and recognised for their work in delivering the Trinity Education?

He suggested that College should articulate its ideals for the outputs of an undergraduate education at Trinity, develop policies to support these ideals, and ensure their effective delivery. He sought advice from the Committee as to how to progress the work programme, perhaps by delegating particular topics to small working groups, holding town hall meetings, nominating 'champions' with particular interest in an area. The meeting noted that this was an ambitious workplan within a tight timeframe. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies intends to bring a report to Council in Trinity Term 2013. While the programme is daunting it could be organised into topics with achievable timelines. For example, progress on some areas is achievable in this academic year while others may need a longer timescale.

Discussion at the meeting agreed that in many instances it is not that policy needs to be developed rather that the degree of existing implementation is either unclear or incomplete. There has already been much work done on, for example, a broad curriculum (1999), teaching and learning (2003) (see UGS/11-12/044). The College Strategic Plan 2009-2014 and the IRIU report of the Institutional Review both consider teaching and learning. The Senior Tutor suggested that School Quality Reviews should focus in greater depth on undergraduate curriculum.

It was suggested that Schools should be asked to identify examples of good practice and also what they perceive as the barriers to achieving the ideals of a Trinity Education. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies has already been in touch, in any case, about visiting School Executives or Teaching and Learning Committees, during this term to discuss the strategy and to learn more about what is happening at a local level.

It was suggested that when assessing the success, or otherwise, of the Trinity Education feedback should be sought from the users - current students, recent graduates, longer-standing graduates who have had an opportunity to assess how their undergraduate study has prepared them for the workplace, and international students who can compare their Trinity experience with others. Members of the committee pointed out that students are more likely to engage if they have confidence that their responses will translate into action.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies undertook to develop a plan in consultation with the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and to bring it back, together with a set of action items and a timeline, before the end of term. In any case, the Committee will be asked to review progress on the work programme at the last meeting of this academic year.

USC/12-13/005 Terms of Reference

The current terms of reference for the Undergraduate Studies Committee reflect the original structure of the Committee, when it was chaired by the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer. Proposed revised terms of reference were circulated which clarify

two issues (i) that the Committee is an academic committee of Council and (ii) to confirm the name of the committee. The Committee approved these changes and, in addition, sought some rewording to clarify its important role in making recommendations to Council on matters of academic policy and practice. These amendments will be made and brought back to the Committee as a Section C agenda item.

USC/12-13/006 Trinity Access 21

College is involved in three access and educational initiatives - Trinity Access Programmes (TAP), Bridge21 and the National Institute for Intellectual Disability (NIID). The three areas have been exploring the creation of a loose umbrella structure which would facilitate the sharing of ideas and expertise, work together to address common problems and consider strategies for sustainability. This structure has been entitled Trinity Access 21 and it is hoped that this common 'brand' will also assist the Trinity Foundation when seeking philanthropic support. There are no resource implications for this new structure and each unit will remain distinct. Trinity Access 21 has already been successful in being shortlisted for a prestigious World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) Award organized by the Qatar Foundation. The Committee, joined the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, sent its congratulations to Trinity Access 21 on this achievement.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies indicated his intention to bring forward a proposal that the coordinating director of Trinity Access 21 be invited to join the Committee. He sees benefit from both perspectives - it would be useful for the committee to be kept informed of the work of Trinity Access 21 and all three units may benefit from a closer working knowledge of the business of the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

USC/12-13/007 Student Case Consultative Group

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies asked the Dean of Students to introduce this item. A significant number of students are given permission to go off-books on medical grounds. The function of this consultative group is to assess the competence to return to study based on the evidence and to ensure the assessment is sufficiently rigorous. The contribution of the Director of Student Health and the College Psychiatrist is essential. The group meets every two weeks and its work has greatly improved the speed of decision-making by ensuring that all information on individual cases is shared at the one point.

It was suggested that the terms of reference circulated should be amended slightly to clarify that the group does not consider all students cases. They will then revert to the Undergraduate Studies Committee for noting.

USC/12-13/008 Skills4Study

Alison Doyle of the Disability Service attended for this item. Skills4Study is a fully interactive e-learning resource which helps students to develop study skills and is particularly useful for those students making the transition from second to third-level. In 2011/12 the package was piloted to first year students registered with the Disability Service, in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, School of Social Work and Social Policy, School of Drama, Film and Music and mature students. The School of Nursing and Midwifery embedded the resource into its Junior Freshman study skills module, found it a useful addition and is keen to continue with it. For 2012-13 the Disability Service is funding a one-year subscription which will make Skills4Study available to all students and staff. Students have been informed of its availability as part of their orientation and there is a link from the local webpage. Ms Doyle gave a brief demonstration to the Committee and urged that they consider recommending it to students encountering difficulties or embedding it into curriculum. It is a flexible resource which can be customized to instructors' needs.

A member of the Committee asked about assessing the quality of the resource and its results. Ms Doyle reported that it is based on the work of Stella Cottrell, a well-

respected author in the field. It is already used in Royal Holloway, University of London, in UCD, DCU and UCC. Ideally, the resource would be available as part of a VLE but as College's VLE is in transition at the moment this is not possible. This makes it difficult to report on usage by module or course cohort. However, Ms Doyle offered to assist any lecturers who wish to track their own students' usage, or indeed, with any aspect of using the resource.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Ms Doyle for attending and noted that the Committee looks forward to a report at the end of this academic year.

USC/12-13/009 **Any Other Business**

At the request of the Quality Officer, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reminded those Schools who had not yet reported on the evaluation of undergraduate modules in 2011/12 to do so as soon as possible. There was some confusion on the part of School Directors of Teaching and Learning (UG) about the format of the report and who was responsible for the return so the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies will ask the Quality Office to communicate again with Schools.

SECTION B

USC/12-13/010 **USC-GSC Standing Committee on GeneSIS Implementation**

The record of meetings on 20th and 23rd July 2012 were noted. See UGS/12-13/002 above.

signature

date