

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 28th May 2013 at 2.00pm in the Board Room.

Present: Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Patrick Geoghegan (*Chair*)
Dean of Students, Professor Amanda Piesse
Senior Tutor, Professor Claire Laudet
Professor Jarlath Kileen, School of English
Professor Ken Mok, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Professor Dermot O'Dwyer, School of Engineering
Professor Graham Harper, School of Physics
Professor Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Pádraig de Paor, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Michael Shevlin, School of Education
Professor Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Michael Gormley, School of Psychology
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Professor David Chew, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Moray McGowan, Director of TSM
Professor Ivana Bacik, School of Law
Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Developer
Mr Daniel Ferrick, Education Officer, Students' Union
Ms Cliona Hannon, Director Trinity Access Programmes
Ms Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Advisor

Apologies: Professor Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music
Professor Mary-Lee Rhodes, School of Business
Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, School of Chemistry
Professor Sharon O'Donnell, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Eleanor Denny, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
Professor Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Professor Francis O'Toole, Director of BESS
Professor Dirk Johannsen, Confederal School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Mr Trevor Peare (Library Representative)
Assistant Academic Secretary, Ms Orla Sheehan
Ms Sinead Leydon, Student Representative

UGS/10-11/073 Student Evaluation

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences chaired the Working Group that had produced the initial recommendations on student evaluation and he attended the meeting for this item. A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, dated 22nd May 2013 and an implementation plan were circulated, together with a document on using Blackboard as a survey tool. The overhaul of the student evaluation system had been discussed at previous meetings of USC (USC/12-13/058 and USC/12-13/065) and the Senior Lecturer had undertaken to bring an implementation plan to the Committee for consideration.

The Senior Lecturer advised members that Council, at its meeting of 15th May 2013, had reaffirmed its commitment to mandatory annual module evaluation at undergraduate level. The Senior Lecturer highlighted that there was no requirement for Heads of Schools or Directors of Teaching and Learning to oversee each evaluation. The role of the Director of Teaching and Learning would be to ensure that lecturers had provided feedback to students. The Senior Lecturer advised that, increasingly, the VLE could be a very useful tool for Schools in carrying out these evaluations. He reminded members that the purpose of the evaluations was to provide a way both for lecturers to reflect on their teaching and also to identify problems. The implementation plan outlined that each School would set up its own process for carrying out the evaluations and collating results.

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences highlighted that the more frequently that modules are evaluated, the less chance there is for serious problems to occur. Evaluations also pick up more minor issues that may otherwise not come to light. Evaluations also highlight what is working well with teaching and provide opportunities for a lecturer to hone their teaching skills. Evaluations provide a platform for teaching to be discussed. The Dean advised that while each School can choose the best mode of evaluation, they should be short and simple and take place in a way that allows anonymity and comparability. Online surveys are usually less administratively burdensome than paper surveys.

Members again raised their concerns that there was a lack of resources in Schools for effectively carrying out annual module evaluation; in particular in Schools with a large number of modules. Many members thought that comments collected from students could often provide more useful feedback than the statistical data collected from surveys. A member repeated his concerns that student surveys were not an efficient way to measure the quality of teaching and he felt that the return of online surveys was so low as to risk not being effective. The Dean acknowledged that carrying out student evaluations is resource intensive but confirmed that it is possible, even with large numbers of modules. He advised that providing effective feedback to the students is key to getting students to carry out questionnaires. Focus groups can achieve very useful feedback but they do not allow for comparability. The simplest method for providing feedback is for the lecturer, at the end of the course or the beginning of the following year, to inform the students of the survey results and advise them what is being done about those areas that needed improvement. The Senior Lecturer advised that College may need to look at resources for the student evaluation process.

A member noted that evaluations should be part of a suite of quality measures for teaching, and not the only measure. The Senior Lecturer noted other quality assurance measures included external examiner reports, engagement with class representatives and feedback from alumni.

- XX The principle of annual mandatory module was approved. It was noted that each school could choose their own method of how evaluations would be carried out.

UGS/12-13/074 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 30th April 2013 were approved.

UGS/12-13/075 Matters arising

- (i) UGS/12-13/064: a member queried whether the proposed date of 2nd January for the final withdrawal deadline for Scholarship Examinations may be too late. The Senior Lecturer advised that he had consulted with the Examinations and Timetables Officer and the recommendations from USC would be brought to the Central Scholarship Committee.
- (ii) A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer dated 22nd May 2013 on guidelines for the return of coursework had been circulated and the Senior Lecturer requested that members bring the document back to their Schools for information.

- (iii) The Trinity Education document had been discussed at Council and had received a very positive response. The consultation process with staff, students and alumni would continue until the end of December 2013.

UGS/12-13/076 Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies' update

- i) A workshop on student retention had taken place in College on 15th May 2013. Mr Declan Reilly of College's Disability Services had organised the seminar for the higher education sector. The seminar was coordinated by the IUA and was well attended by the sector. Staff and student representatives from Trinity attended, with the Dean of Students acting as Trinity's Team Leader for the event. The workshop provided a space for institutions to discuss both their achievements and issues with student engagement and allowed for best practice to be shared in a small-group setting. The workshop had received positive feedback from the sector and the HEA.
- ii) The Senior Lecturer had been invited to sit on the board of the newly formed National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.
- iii) The HEA advised the Senior Lecturer that they considered the reduction of TSM CAO course codes to have been a very effective change and that it was encouraging to other institutions in the sector.

UGS/12-13/077 Draft Senior Lecturer's Annual Report

The Senior Lecturer advised that data in the report was still being updated and the final version would be emailed to members following its circulation to Council the following week. The report had been prepared later in the year than usual due to staffing constraints. The Senior Lecturer and Assistant Academic Secretary will be working on revising the format of the report for next year. The Senior Lecturer brought the meeting through the draft report.

Key points noted were:

- the return of external examiner's reports for 2010/11 had been updated since the last annual report but that the return rate was still low in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Staff in the Office of the Vice-Provost were compiling a list of outstanding reports and would notify the relevant Directors of Teaching and Learning and follow up directly with external examiners where necessary.
- ten non-EU students were recruited to College through Study Group International (SGI), including one who had deferred for this year
- the appropriateness of having certain staffing information in the report was discussed
- the report was very useful to College staff for referencing information throughout the year.

The Senior Lecturer thanked Ms Jade Barreto for her work on the report.

UGS/12-13/078 Student Charter

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A memorandum from the Dean of Students dated 22nd May 2013 together with a revised version of the Student Charter had been circulated. The Dean of Students advised that the current Student Charter in use in College had last been updated in 2009. The purpose of the Charter is to set out what students could expect from College and what College expected from students. The Dean of Students had worked with the Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Union in updating the document. Following consideration at USC, the Charter would be discussed at Faculty Executives and subsequently at the Council meeting of 25th September 2013. The revised Charter will then be launched at the end of September. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- the Charter will be amended to include that students could expect to be informed of the turnaround time for their assessments and coursework
- 'teaching and learning' on page 7 should be amended to 'teaching'
- the report should note that some placements are part of the curriculum

- the report should make it clear that the onus is on students to make themselves aware of the fitness to practise regulations
- the line on anonymous examining should be clarified by stating that students can expect to be examined anonymously 'where possible/appropriate'
- care is needed to ensure that there are no discrepancies in information where there is an overlap with other sources, e.g. the College Calendar. It was noted that the Charter is an aspirational document and that it has a proviso that it is not intended to create legal rights or obligations. The Dean advised that there was another page to the Charter, not circulated, which guided students to other sources of relevant information in College.

UGS/12-13/079 Fitness to Practise

Procedural Guidelines for the Implementation of the Trinity Fitness to Practise Policy were circulated. The policy is in force in College since 2011 but there had been some uncertainty around the implementation of the policy, in particular about which cases were fitness to practise cases and which were disciplinary cases. The Dean of Students had revised the document in conjunction with the Secretary's Office. The flow chart contained in the document indicated how cases would be handled in different ways if they were disciplinary cases or non-disciplinary cases. A disciplinary case ceases to be a fitness to practise matter and is handled by the Junior Dean. Where there are no methods in place for dealing with a case, the School Fitness to Practise Committee will be convened.

The following points were raised in the ensuing discussion:

- there should be a definition of 'fitness to practise'
- 'poor conduct' is not standard fitness to practise terminology
- the document should reference the College child protection policy
- the document states that students have the right to invite witnesses to the hearing; the Dean of Students will seek further legal clarification to investigate whether College could exclude students from bringing a lawyer as their witness
- the Dean of Students will discuss the document with the Schools of Medicine and Nursing
- the details regarding a quorate of the School Committee needs updating
- students should be aware that it is not mandatory to disclose a disability.

XX The Dean of Students will further liaise with the College Solicitor on the document and it will then proceed to Council for noting.

UGS/12-13/080 Policy on Supports for Student Parents, Student Carers and Students who experience Pregnancy

XX A paper dated January 2013 had been circulated. The Dean of Students spoke to the document. She noted that Trinity is the first Irish University to have a policy for student carers. The document lays down guidelines for good practice in the College's provision for and commitment to students who have parental and/or caring responsibilities or who experience pregnancy. It outlines the responsibilities of College staff in responding to the needs of these students. The policy aims to ensure students are not penalised financially or academically for taking the necessary time off, and aims, where possible, to facilitate students returning to their studies at the point they left, rather than having to repeat the entire year. The Committee noted and approved the policy.

UGS/12-13/081 College Services for off-books students taking examinations

A Memorandum from the Dean of Students, dated 21st May 2013 had been circulated. The Dean of Students outlined the duty of care that College has to students who are off-books but taking examinations. Such students could be at risk as they cannot fully access College facilities such as the Library and IS Services and do not have access to the College Health Service, the Disability Service or the College Counselling Service. The Dean sought the approval of USC to allow these students to pay a fee of €500 to College to permit them to avail of College services. This measure would support students who were in danger of dropping out and may

help with student retention. The Students Services Committee had agreed the proposal in principle. It was further proposed that in cases of hardship, the student could apply to the Senior Tutor's Office for the waiving of the examination fee. The Senior Lecturer advised that there were some implementation issues that would need to be investigated and that as there were financial implications with the proposal, the issue would be discussed at the Planning Group meeting which was taking place at the same time as USC. The Committee approved the proposal in principle and noted that this was subject to approval at Planning Group.

UGS/12-13/082 Trinity Access Programmes

- (a) 'Ripples of Hope' report and Executive Summary were circulated. 2013 sees the 20th anniversary of the Trinity Access Programmes (TAP). To coincide with this TAP commissioned the Children's Research Centre, TCD, to conduct a research study of graduates who had entered Trinity via a higher education access route. The study focused on graduates' pathway to and through TCD, and the impact of their degree on their family, community, and professional identity. Amongst other findings, the study showed:
- that the majority of TAP Trinity alumni had parents/guardians that were early school leavers
 - the majority of TAP Trinity alumni were employed in traditional professional roles such as social workers, teachers, solicitors, healthcare professionals
 - graduates with children play an active role in their children's education and expect their children to progress further in education than they did
 - many graduates remain living in their community of origin
 - many alumni did not participate in Trinity activities and societies
 - the move to large lectures was daunting after their small group teaching and learning experience in TAP
 - by their third and fourth years participants were more comfortable in the teaching and learning environment when there was greater emphasis on small group work and projects and this opened up possibilities for new friendships and connections among non-access student.

(b) This item was deferred to a future meeting.

UGS/12-13/083 Calendar 2013/14 Part I - General Regulations

Ms Sorcha De Brunner was welcomed to the meeting for this item. A revised copy of the 'General Regulations and Information' from the University Calendar was circulated. In particular, the following points were discussed:

- that the General Regulations will be updated to reflect that many professional courses have supplemental examinations in the Sophister years
- as last year, due to possible delays relating to SITS, there will be some flexibility in the date by which a late registration charge will be imposed on students

UGS/12-13/084 Any other business

- (i) The Senior Lecturer noted that this was the Students' Union Education Officer's last meeting after two years on USC; he thanked him for the great contribution he had made and wished him well in the future.
- (ii) The Senior Lecturer also thanked those Committee members who were stepping down at the end of the academic year, and noted their hard work and endeavour.

UGS/12-13/085 Items for noting

USC noted the following document which had been circulated for information:

- (i) Skills4study - the Senior Tutor felt that it was premature to discontinue this as it takes time for initiatives of this nature to embed in College life. She noted it was a very good initiative and that College should try to continue to fund the licence fee.

- (ii) Return of Coursework: Guidelines for Good Practice - memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, dated 22nd May 2013
- (iii) Extension to the Bachelor in Music Education teaching practice placement - memorandum from Course Co-ordinator, Bachelor in Music Education, dated 21st May 2013.

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