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UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 27th May 2014 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Patrick Geoghegan (*Chair*)
Mr Jack Leahy, Education Officer, Students' Union
Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
Senior Tutor, Professor Claire Laudet
Professor Elaine Moriarty, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Fáinche Ryan, Confederal School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Professor Graham Harper, School of Physics
Professor Mairead Brady, Director of BESS
Professor Mary-Lee Rhodes, School of Business
Professor Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
Professor Philip McEvansoneya, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Michael Gormley, School of Psychology
Professor Ken Mok, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Sharon O'Donnell, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Developer
Mr Trevor Peare, Library Representative

Apologies: Professor Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Professor Jane Farrar, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Ciaran Simms, School of Engineering
Professor Oran Doyle, School of Law
Professor Jarlath Killeen, School of English
Professor Paschalis Karageorgis, School of Mathematics
Professor Moray McGowan, Director of TSM
Professor Pádraig de Paor, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry
Professor Michael Shevlin, School of Education
Dean of Students, Professor Kevin O'Kelly
Ms Cliona Hannon, Director, Trinity Access Programmes
Ms Claire Donlon, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan; Professor Gillian Martin (incoming Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies); Professor Des Ryan, School of Law (incoming DUTL); Ms Katie Byrne, incoming Students' Union Education Officer; Ms. Deborah Kelleher, Director, RIAM, for item USC/13-14/079; Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Trinity Teaching and Learning, for item USC/13-14/084.

USC/13-14/075 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 29th April 2014 were approved.

USC/13-14/076 Matters arising

USC/13-14/065 The proposal for a new integrated Pharmacy programme would shortly proceed to external review. The Senior Lecturer and the Dean of Graduate Studies had considered the issue of the appeals process for students in the fifth year of the programme but further consultation was needed.

USC/13-14/067 The Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2012/13 had been discussed and approved at the Council meeting of 14th May 2014.

USC/13-14/016 Work with the Semester Online Consortium had stalled due to issues surrounding the fee but the video content of Trinity's online module would be used for other purposes by College.

USC/13-14/077 Review of Work Plan for 2013/14

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, dated 21st May 2014, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer brought the meeting through each of the items on the work plan and discussed the progress that had been made on each during the year.

The work plan comprised the following items:

1. Developing the **Trinity Education** document and bringing it through as an official policy in January 2014.
2. Ensuring the successful delivery of the **feasibility study in admissions**.
3. Developing **Trinity Explore** and utilising our student ambassadors to encourage more students from across the island of Ireland to apply to Trinity, with the eventual objective to become the university in Ireland with the highest number of CAO first preferences.
4. Devising and implementing a policy to attract more students from **Northern Ireland**.
5. Designing with CAPSL a flexible and innovative method of **professional development**, developing a model that utilises both the academic practice expertise and teaching expertise in College.
6. Redesigning the **Broad Curriculum** model, including a flexible structure that will allow for online modules to be taken in international universities as part of it.
7. Continuing the work of **reducing course codes**, in line with the agreed IUA position, in a way that does not affect the academic integrity of courses.
8. **Clarifying the regulations** concerning supplementals in the Sophister years to ensure consistency in the treatment of students.

In the discussion that followed, the Senior Lecturer advised that the Senior Academic Developer, Dr. Ciara O'Farrell, had developed a Professional Special Purpose Certificate in Academic Practice which had been approved by the Graduate Studies Committee and would now proceed to external review and to Council. The final proposal would be brought to USC for information. The course was designed for academic staff in Trinity College, has a flexible structure, holds a credit weighting of 15 ECTS, and puts College in an excellent position regarding the recommendation in the 'McAleese Report' on the 'Modernisation of Higher Education' that all teaching staff should hold a teaching qualification by 2020. The Senior Lecturer congratulated the Senior Academic Developer for the work involved in developing this excellent course.

USC/13-14/078 Trinity Education

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, dated 21st May 2014, was circulated. The general 2-page Trinity Education document had been approved by Council at its meeting of 14th May 2014. Arising from the issues in the document, shorter policy documents would be brought to USC for discussion and approval. The introduction of a compulsory project/dissertation for students entering College in 2014 had been approved by Council and students entering in September 2014 and afterwards would be required to complete an independent project or dissertation in one of their final two years. The Senior Lecturer will work with departments and schools to see how this will work on particular courses in terms of resources and in terms of what is academically appropriate. In response to a query, the Senior Lecturer emphasised

that a flexible, consensual approach would be adopted to find what is academically suitable in each area and that each academic unit would have full power to assign an appropriate and ethical project.

The Senior Lecturer will disseminate the results of the previous month's survey on the Trinity Education to the wider academic community.

USC/13-14/079 Proposal for a Diploma course in Music Teaching and Performance from RIAM, for accreditation

XX The Senior Lecturer welcomed the Director of RIAM to the meeting for this item. A proposal for the validation of the Diploma in Music Teaching and Performance at the RIAM had been circulated. The Director introduced the level 7 course and noted that it had been in place for many years but RIAM were now looking for Trinity College to validate the Diploma. The credit value of this one-year fulltime course is 60 ECTS and if approved, accreditation would start in 2014/15. A minimum of 5 EU/Non EU students and a maximum of 12 would be admitted each academic year; there has on average been an annual intake of 10 students. The course has typically attracted both gifted school leavers and music graduates and can be a pathway to the second year of the Bachelor in Music Performance, subject to passing examinations at a sufficient level and meeting matriculation requirements.

In response to a comment, the Director agreed that the entry requirements to the course were demanding but noted that there was an access programme for students who were not quite at the requisite level and also that a step-back to part-time teaching was available. A limited amount of financial aid was available to students. The Senior Lecturer noted that the RIAM Associated Colleges Degree Committee (ACDC) was responsible for quality assurance processes pertaining to validated awards.

Due to the tight turnaround time required to circulate the proposal to the final Council meeting of the academic year, the proposal had already been sent for external review where it had received positive feedback. The reviewer's comments would be incorporated into the proposal document prior to Council circulation. The Committee approved the proposal to proceed to Council.

USC/13-14/080 Academic Feedback to Student

XX A memorandum from the Students' Union Education Officer, dated 21st May 2014, had been circulated. The memorandum proposed the introduction of a fixed turnaround time of 20 working days for the delivery of academic performance feedback on assessed work. In cases where this would not be possible, an appropriate member of academic staff in the School/Discipline must approve an extension and students must be notified of the revised deadline.

Trinity College has scored poorly on the area of student feedback in the recent surveys in the International Student Barometer (ISB). It is widely recognised that timely feedback is vital to students' learning and that it should be given in a manner and at a time that allows the feedback to be 'fed forward' into other assessments. The Education Officer noted that 'feedback' was an ambivalent term that could be used to cover both feedback to individual students and also general feedback given to a class. However, he advised that in universities that he had encountered in his research that had a set feedback timeframe, it appeared to solely refer to individual feedback. The incoming Education Officer believed that class feedback was often too generic to be of much value to students and the emphasis should be on individual feedback. The Committee agreed that peer feedback has proven to be a useful tool for students and should perhaps be utilised more. A Committee member commented that individual lecturers are best placed to determine which type of feedback is most appropriate for each piece of assessed work. Some members felt that it should not be necessary to seek an approval from schools for an extension and the Senior Lecturer agreed that each School could have its own policy on this. It was agreed that managing students' expectations was vital and they

should always be kept informed of any delays in providing feedback. Should the fixed turnaround time become College policy, Directors of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning should ensure that staff in their schools are adhering to it, and it was suggested that a mandatory question covering this could be added to module evaluations. The Committee approved the proposal to proceed to Council.

USC/13-14/081 Student Recruitment

The Senior Lecturer welcomed the Admissions Liaison Officer to the meeting for this item. He commended the great work the Admissions Liaison Officer had carried out including work on Trinity Explore, training of student ambassadors, and the new 'Study at Trinity' website.

The Admissions Liaison Officer gave a presentation based on his M.Sc. thesis 'Student Recruitment Structure and Strategy at TCD'. He proposed that the main issues with student recruitment in College are the lack of a coordinated approach and lack of dedicated resources. College has less than one fulltime resource working on undergraduate recruitment and no dedicated resources for postgraduate recruitment. Some of our schools have recruitment resources, but most do not. There is no cohesion between these different areas and no student recruitment strategy in place. Our competitors in the Irish university sector are more proactive in this area with better structures and more resources in place.

One of the key recommendations in the presentation is that College have an integrated approach to student recruitment. College must put in place a clear mission statement on student recruitment, which should then be used to formalise high level objectives to achieve this and these should feed into our recruitment strategy. College should have specific recruitment strategies for undergraduate students, postgraduate students, international students, access students and students with disabilities, and these strategies must feed down into school-level strategies. All of these strategies should align with the communications and marketing strategy and College's web strategy.

The results of a survey of second-level students throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland showed that for Irish students the top reason for selecting a university was the social life, clubs and societies, followed by the university's facilities, and the academic reputation. Students in Northern Ireland cited academic reputation of the university as the primary reason. The new entrants' survey which is carried out annually in College, consistently indicates that the primary reason for students to choose Trinity College is reputation. The survey showed that a university's prospectus, Open Day and website are the top sources of information when selecting a university. These were closely followed by information evenings, school visits and meeting university representatives; all of which prove problematic for Trinity due to a lack of dedicated student recruitment resources. The survey results indicated that students were put off applying to Trinity because of the high points required for its courses, followed by the high cost of living in Dublin, and their course choice not being offered. Trinity's perceived exclusivity was also stated as a reason for not applying and College should take steps to change this perception.

The Senior Lecturer noted that College's Strategic Plan should include measurable student recruitment targets, a section specifying the quality of students College seeks to attract, and also a set of student recruitment objectives.

It was noted that the Admissions Forum had proved to be a useful bridge between USC and admissions issues and that this Forum should continue if possible.

The Committee thanked the Admissions Liaison Officer for an excellent and informative presentation.

USC/13-14/082 Northern Ireland Feasibility Study

XX A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, dated 22nd May 2014, was circulated. Much work had been carried out in Trinity and across the university sector on

admissions from Northern Ireland and it has been recognised that the current admissions requirements for Northern Irish students may not be fair as students are required to present 4 A-Levels whereas the large majority of Northern Irish students only take 3 A-Levels.

Trinity has recently embarked on its Northern Ireland Engagement Programme which has been positively received by schools and alumni in Northern Ireland and the DES. The sector is attempting to find a solution to the recruitment issue but this may take some time. It is proposed that Trinity should launch a feasibility study, starting with 2015/16 admissions, to test one possible solution where a limited number of Northern Irish students would be admitted using a formula whereby students who take 3 A-Levels would have their weakest subject counted twice for the purpose of points allocation.

The Committee was in agreement that rather than a set number of Northern Irish students being admitted to each course, it would be more appropriate that the number admitted should correlate to the admissions quota for the course. The final proposal will state an intake of 3 NI students per course for courses with a high quota, and 1 or 2 NI students, as appropriate, for courses with smaller quotas.

The Committee approved the proposal for proceeding to Council.

USC/13-14/083 Scholarship Discussion

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, dated 21st May 2014, was circulated. The issues surrounding the Scholarship process were discussed at the previous meeting of USC (USC/13/14/066) and it had been accepted that the number of Scholarships awarded had reached an unsustainable level and that a mechanism for ensuring the consistency of awarding Scholarship across all disciplines should be introduced. The Senior Lecturer introduced a discussion paper whereby every candidate would be required to take a general paper which would be set and marked by the Central Scholarship Committee. The paper would consist of 24 questions, with candidates required to answer 3 questions in 3 hours. The questions would not be based on a specific course of study but would be along the lines of the Entrance Fellowship examination taken by students at All Souls College, Oxford - a sample of questions had been circulated to the Committee. The idea of a general paper had received some support at Council and Board but had not been favourably received by the Scholars' Committee which felt that it could unduly benefit students in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

The Committee noted that a general paper might change the nature of Scholarship by rewarding candidates who had not just achieved an exceptional level of excellence in their own discipline, but also were able to demonstrate a wider capacity for critical thought and argument. The Committee overall was against the idea of a general paper. There was support, however, for a paper within a candidate's discipline that raised topics not covered on the curriculum and it was noted that this is current practice in a number of areas. The Senior Lecturer would explore this idea further, and also the concept of a paper that would require candidates to make connections between modules. The Senior Lecturer promised that there would be extensive consultation with the Fellows and the Scholars' Secretary and her Committee before any serious proposals were developed.

USC/13-14/084 Calendar 2014/15 Part I - General Regulations

A revised copy of 'General Regulations and Information' from the University Calendar was circulated. The Senior Lecturer welcomed Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Trinity Teaching and Learning, to the meeting for this item. Ms De Brunner outlined that following substantial changes to the General Regulations in recent years, most of the changes were of a minor nature this year. The most substantial change was to clarify that the Senior Lecturer or Academic Appeals Committee has the authority to grant permission for a student to take a special examination.

A member raised a concern that there had been an increase in students in the

Sophister years permitted to take an examination at the supplemental session. Even where course regulations did not permit this, these could be overruled by the Senior Lecturer who could permit a student to sit an examination as a first attempt at the supplemental session. While this permission was given with the caveat that it was 'without precedent', members would prefer to see a more regulated approach to this issue and it was agreed that the same regulation should be put in place for all areas. The Timetables and Examinations Officer was preparing a report on these issues and would consult with the Senior Lecturer and Senior Tutor.

USC/13-14/085 Trinity Explore

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, dated 21st May 2014, had been circulated. In February 2014 undergraduate students were invited to make short videos about life in Trinity for publication on the Trinity Explore website (www.tcd.ie/explore). The judging panel consisted of the Senior Lecturer, College Web Officer, SU Education Officer and the Admissions Liaison Officer. In total, nine videos were submitted, all of which were of a very high quality, and four were awarded the Trinity Explore Video Prize and will be made available on the website. A fifth video will also be used on the website following some editing and will also receive the prize money. A sample of the videos was shown at the meeting and considered to be of an excellent standard. It is intended to run the competition again next year.

USC/13-14/086 Any other business

- (i) The Senior Tutor thanked the Examinations and Timetables Officer, Mary McMahon, and her team for their hard work, dedication and flexibility, and noted that they had on many occasions been available to answer queries long after College offices had officially closed. This praise was endorsed by the Senior Lecturer and the Committee.
- (ii) The Senior Lecturer noted that this was the Students' Union Education Officer's last meeting and he thanked him for the great contribution he had made to USC and wished him well in the future.
- (iii) The Senior Lecturer thanked the Committee members for their hard work and endeavour during the year as he concluded his final meeting in the chair.

USC/13-14/087 Items for noting

There were no items for noting.