XX = Council relevance

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE**

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on **25th November 2014** at 2.30pm in the Board Room.

Present: Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, Professor Gillian Martin (*Chair*)
                Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
                Ms Katie Byrne, Education Officer, Students' Union
                Dean of Students, Professor Kevin O'Kelly
                Senior Tutor, Professor Claire Laudet
                Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Developer
                Professor Elaine Moriarty, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
                Professor Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
                Professor Jarlath Killeen, School of English
                Professor Fáinche Ryan, Confederal School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
                Professor Des Ryan, School of Law
                Professor Mary-Lee Rhodes, School of Business
                Professor James Hanrahan, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
                Professor Rachel Moss, School of Histories and Humanities
                Professor Derek O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science
                Professor David Wilkins, School of Mathematics
                Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
                Professor Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music
                Professor Howard Smith, School of Psychology
                Professor Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry
                Professor Ken Mok, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
                Professor Ciaran Simms, School of Engineering
                Professor Mike Brady, School of Computer Science and Statistics
                Professor Michael Shevlin, School of Education
                Professor Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
                Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
                Professor Sarah Smyth, Director of TSM
                Mr Trevor Peare, Library Representative

Apologies: Professor Charles Patterson, School of Physics
                Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
                Professor Sharon O'Donnell, School of Nursing and Midwifery
                Professor Jane Farrar, School of Genetics and Microbiology
                Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
                Ms Cliona Hannon, Director, Trinity Access Programmes
                Ms Ciara Coughlan, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan; Quality Officer and Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Trinity Teaching and
                Learning, for item USC/14-15/025

USC/14-15/020 Minutes
The minutes of the meeting of 28th October 2014 were approved.

USC/14-15/021 Matters arising
USC/14-15/003 Issues relating to the return of postgraduate coursework had been discussed at the Graduate Studies Committee and Council and it had been agreed that the return of work at postgraduate level should not exceed 30 days. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer undertook to seek clarification on exactly what 'coursework' comprises. The Dean of Graduate Studies and the Dean of

Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer will shortly contact all schools to outline the policy that has been agreed in both the postgraduate and undergraduate areas.

USC/14-15/014 The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked members who had submitted feedback on the Mature Student Application Form to the Mature Student Officer.

USC/14-15/015 A College-wide consultation on the visual identity will take place in the following week and members were encouraged to attend.

USC/14-15/022 Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer's report
- The Provost will chair the group that will focus on the Trinity Education project highlighted in the Strategic Plan. The group will commence work early in the new year.

- The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer highlighted changes for registering with the Teaching Council which had previously been noted for information at USC.   The current regulations of the Teaching Council specify particular courses that automatically allow students to register as second level teachers; this will change for graduates post 2017 and registration will become dependent on the number of credits and modules a student takes. The Dean will shortly circulate links to the Teaching Council website to members for information and encouraged members to familiarise themselves with the changes in advance of Open Day. The Head of the School of Education will be invited to attend a future meeting of USC to discuss this issue. The Dean will investigate whether a brief note about these changes can be included in the Prospectus 2016.

- The Provost Teaching Award Scheme for 2014/15 will shortly be launched.

- Council, at its meeting on 19th November, approved a proposal for the establishment of the Trinity Global Engagement Awards. The award scheme will be launched next year and is open to past and present staff of Trinity College. The aim of the awards is to recognise staff who have made an exceptional contribution to strengthening the global engagement aims of the University. Up to three awards with a value of €2,000 will be made annually.

USC/14-15/023 Irish Survey of Student Engagement 2014
The Dean of Students spoke to this item. The Irish Survey of Student Engagement seeks to collect information on how students engage with their learning environment. The results of the survey are intended to add value at institutional level, and to inform national policy. An online survey was offered in February and March to first and final year undergraduate students and to postgraduate students on taught programmes.   A report on the national results had been published and is available at http://studentsurvey.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ISSE-Report-2014-web.pdf.

The response rate in College had improved significantly from 9.5% to 16.5% which is the highest rate of all the universities. The Dean of Students praised the dedication of the Students' Union and the previous Dean of Students for this improvement.

The Trinity-specific data had been supplied to College and the Quality Office had compiled a preliminary report for the Quality Committee.   The data can be sorted into different groups, e.g. by year, by gender, by age, by faculty, by school discipline, and used to track trends.

The Dean highlighted some of the results to USC. The survey comprised 11 indices split into engagement indices and outcomes indices.   On the engagement indices, when TCD scores are compared to other ISSE University scores, the first year TCD scores are higher in 'Academic Challenge' and 'Enriching Educational Experiences'

and lower in 'Active Learning', 'Student and Staff Interaction', 'Supportive Learning Environment' and 'Work Integrated Learning'. On the outcome indices, the first year TCD scores are higher than other ISSE University scores in 'Higher Order Thinking' and lower in 'General Learning Outcomes', 'General Development Outcomes', 'Career Readiness', and 'Overall Satisfaction'.

While Trinity scored poorly with regard to the first year student experience, by the time students reached their final year, the survey results indicated they were far more satisfied with their experience in Trinity. The survey results should inform discussion for meeting many of the goals of the Strategic Plan and show that we need to further focus on the transition from secondary school to College in terms of learning support, study skills support, and engagement for first year students.

In response to a query on the connection between module evaluation, external examiner feedback, school reviews, programme reviews, and whether the various data could be viewed as a whole, the Academic Secretary advised that the quality remit for academic units has been devolved to Faculties and Schools. Based on the various reports and data for each school, each Faculty will produce a quality report for the next meeting of the Quality Committee and the three Faculty reports will then be combined into one annual quality report.

USC/14-15/024   **Scholarship - General Paper**

A spreadsheet detailing the most up to date returns for Scholarship general papers had been circulated immediately prior to the meeting and paper copies were also tabled. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked members for the extensive consultation and hard work carried out to date. The Dean had met with some Directors who were having difficulties establishing a general paper and it was anticipated that all courses would shortly have a tangible proposal.

It was noted in a discussion about the proposals that the proportion of general to non-general credit available varies across courses. The Dean advised that it was not possible to standardise this as in many cases an examination paper is used in several different courses, but in all programmes for which a proposal had been received, a minimum of 25% of the overall mark is made up of either a general paper or a general component or components on papers.

The spreadsheet is to be finalised for circulation to USC for the meeting on 13th January 2015 and it will then proceed to the Central Scholarship Committee and subsequently to Council for its meeting on 11th February and Board on 25th March. Calendar changes are due to be submitted by 6th February and will be discussed at the USC meeting of 24th March. The type and level of information provided on the Scholarship examination in the Calendar should be standardised across courses and should include details of which papers are general or contain general sections, and the weighting of papers. Members were asked to review the spreadsheet and submit any necessary corrections/changes to undergraduate.studies@tcd.ie.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer will circulate the timeline involved in the process and will follow up with Directors on courses that do not yet have a firm proposal for a general paper.

USC/14-15/025   **New Undergraduate Course Approval Process**

A memorandum from the Academic Secretary, dated 20th November 2014 had been circulated together with a template and process map for the new course approval process. The Quality Officer and Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Trinity Teaching and Learning, attended the meeting for this item. Concern had been raised during ABC meetings in the previous academic year that the course proposal process was overly cumbersome and the template required information that was not always available at the time of writing the proposal. As part of a phase of consultation to improve the process, feedback was sought from members to determine the procedures

involved at school-level. The consultation process will also include the Graduate Studies Committee, academic offices, and the Academic Registry.

The undergraduate course proposal template had been aligned with the postgraduate course proposal template as much as possible and had been designed to make key information more readily available. Ms De Brunner spoke to the template and highlighted the main changes that included both minor formatting changes and completely new information requirements.

Comments were invited and a member who had recently completed the course proposal process had found it a comprehensive process and noted that staff in Trinity Teaching and Learning had been very helpful. She felt that consideration should be given to whether the process was necessary when it involved the reformatting of an existing course rather than approval for a new course and it was noted that determining whether a proposal had to go through the standard approval process was done on a case-by-case basis.

The representative from the Library expressed his disappointment that the impact of new courses on the Library had not been sufficiently considered in the proposal process. He highlighted the information the Library requires, including: whether printed or electronic material is required, the attendance pattern, the percentage of overseas students, whether there is an emphasis on group study, and whether the examination period is outside of the standard period. The Dean of Students advised that the type of student is relevant when considering the cost to College services as certain student cohorts place a disproportionate burden on services and where courses are targeting these students it should be highlighted in the proposal.

Courses should take the Trinity Inclusive Curriculum into account at the design stage and a member noted that a section on this could be included in the template. The TSM Course Director noted an extra layer in the process for courses where a Course Office was also involved and she undertook to send the TSM protocol for course approval to Trinity Teaching and Learning for information.

The Academic Secretary advised that staff in schools should contact Trinity Teaching and Learning at the earliest possible stage of developing a new course.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked the Quality Officer and Ms De Brunner.

USC/14-15/026   **Proposal for a direct entry course leading to the award of Bachelor in Business Studies**
The Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning from the School of Business introduced the proposal for a direct entry course leading to the award of Bachelor in Business Studies (BBS). The Bachelor in Business Studies is an established degree award which students enter through the BESS programme. Students in BESS follow a multi-disciplinary first year and then choose to either combine Business with another subject - which leads to the award of BA (Moderatorship) - or to specialise in Business which leads to the award of a Bachelor in Business Studies. The new entry route for the BBS will provide students the possibility to focus on business from the beginning of their degree, which research has shown to be a preference of many potential students and especially international students. The designation of the existing BBS award in BESS is under review.

The direct entry BBS is a four year full-time undergraduate programme that is proposed for commencement in 2016. The proposed total intake for the programme is 75 students; 50 non-EU students and 25 CAO students. The programme consists of existing BESS modules with fewer electives, and more business specific modules in the first year. The curriculum aligns with many of the actions in the Strategic Plan under Renewing the Trinity Education and includes core modules in innovation and entrepreneurship. Within four years of the programme

launch, it is anticipated that the number of business undergraduates in Trinity will rise from 600 to 900 with an increase in revenue from €3.6m to €6m.

The undergraduate programme is part of an ambitious development plan within the School of Business with the postgraduate part including the MBA, an executive education programme and a research programme. The development programme forms a large part of the internationalisation strategy of increasing non-EU students in College.

In response to a comment about the level of recruitment associated with the development plan within the context of the challenging financial climate in College, the Director advised that a number of the programmes will be self-financing and that the Business School would still be lightly staffed in comparison to its competitors. The Senior Academic Developer commended the varied and non-traditional methods of assessments, but had a concern that the assessment load on students was too heavy and proposed that a mapping exercise be carried out.
The Senior Tutor raised a general concern that a high level of continuous assessment in courses could lead to a situation where students did not have sufficient capacity to concentrate on their final year dissertation. The Library representative advised that under the current financial arrangements it would be very difficult for the Library to meet the demands of this course.

XX   A number of members commended the course proposal and USC approved the course for proceeding to external review and Council.

USC/14-15/027   **SITS – issues with functionality and business processes**
A document had been circulated which listed the problems with SITS that are most frequently encountered by schools. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer would meet with the Academic Registry and ISS prior to the next meeting of USC to discuss what improvements in functionality will come on stream under the stabilisation project. Mr John Murphy, ISS, will attend the next meeting of USC to discuss the issues highlighted in the document.

Members noted that the document did not express the gravity of the situation in schools where these issues often prevent a school from carrying out necessary functions like registering students and processing examination results. The Committee thanked the Dean for raising the issues at Council and asked that the full seriousness of the situation be conveyed to ISS and Academic Registry. It was also noted that the system will have to be future-proofed.

The Senior Tutor noted that a number of parents had such strong concerns about issues caused by SITS that they were intending on getting legal advice and that College must do its utmost to resolve the issues to limit damage to its reputation.

USC/14-15/028   **Any other business**
There was no other business.

USC/14-15/029   **Items for noting**
There were no items for noting.