Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 10 October 2017 at 2.15pm in the Boardroom.

Present: Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
                    Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
                    Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor
                    Professor Kevin O'Kelly, Dean of Students
                    Professor Kevin Mitchell, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education
                    Professor Kristian Myrseth, School of Business
                    Professor Paula Colavita, School of Chemistry
                    Professor Mike Brady, School of Computer Science and Statistics
                    Professor Nicholas Johnson, School of Creative Arts
                    Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science
                    Professor Stephen Minton, School of Education
                    Professor Alan O'Connor, School of Engineering
                    Professor Frank Wellmer, School of Genetics and Microbiology
                    Professor Rachel Moss, School of Histories and Humanities
                    Professor Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
                    Professor Rachel Walsh, School of Law
                    Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
                    Professor Vladimir Dotsenko, School of Mathematics
                    Professor Paul Eastham, School of Physics
                    Professor Elizabeth Nixon, School of Psychology
                    Professor Cathriona Russell, School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology
                    Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
                    Professor Alice Jorgensen, School of English
                    Professor Stephen Matterson, Director of TSM
                    Professor Michael Wycherley, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
                    Professor Philip Curry, School of Social Work and Social Policy
                    Ms Sally Anne McCarthy, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
                    Professor Naomi Elliott, School of Nursing and Midwifery
                    Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
                    Professor Kevin Conlon, School of Medicine
                    Ms Alice Mac Pherson, Education Officer, Students' Union

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan, Trinity Teaching and Learning; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Dr Alison Oldam, Director of Student Services; Ms Louise Williams, Trinity Teaching and Learning for USC/17-18/013; Ms Fedelma McNamara for USC/17-18/014; Ms Leona Coady, Director of Academic Registry for USC/17-18/014c

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USC/17-18/010   Minutes of the meeting of 12 September 2017
                    The minutes were approved.

USC/17-18/011   Matters arising
                    USC/16-17/065 & USC/16-17/073   The legal contract regarding the dual degree programmes with Columbia was expected to be received by the end of the week. Depending

on the required review time, the Columbia proposals would be brought to the Council meeting of 25 October 2017 or 29 November 2017.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that Columbia require students who have been educated through the English language to sit the SAT or ACT examinations in order to be considered for entry to the dual programmes. Students would also be required to achieve a score of 7 in the IELTS English language test. Students who have not been educated through the English language need to achieve a score of 7 in the IELTS, but are not required to sit the SAT or ACT. The Dean noted that applicants to the dual degree would have to present with a 7 in the IELTS, but with no score falling below 6. Within College there was some variety in the IELTS requirements - Dental Science and Clinical Speech and Language Studies had a requirement for a 7 in the IELTS, whereas other courses required a 6.5 with no score falling below 6.

Members raised concerns over the requirement to sit the SAT or ACT. Due to the timing of the application process, students would be required to have taken the SAT/ACT prior to application to the CAO. Members felt that students would not be aware of this requirement and that it was unrealistic to expect them to have sat the test. The SAT is a set of American tests and some members felt that there was an inherent cultural bias and also noted the high workload involved in preparing for the tests. Members felt that the requirement to sit the SAT/ACT could significantly reduce the pool of local applicants to the programmes. One member noted that it was not out of the ordinary or unreasonable for Columbia to require the SAT for entry to the programmes.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that it was not possible to use the Leaving Certificate to fulfil the Columbia requirement of a standardised test as the results would not be available in sufficient time for the selection process. It had previously been proposed to use the Junior Certificate for this purpose, but that had not been acceptable to Columbia. She advised that the literature for the course would have to provide very specific details on the dates and availability of the tests. She recognised the extra demands it would put upon students in their Leaving Certificate year.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies would meet with the Vice-President of Global Relations the following day and would relay the points made by members.

USC/16-17/075   Members were reminded to update the plagiarism entry in course handbooks and to include the correct links to the Calendar. An email on this had been sent to School administrators.

USC/16-17/003   A proposal on Entrance Exhibitions would be brought to the Council meeting of 25 October 2017.

USC/16-17/005   The new degree destinations for the International Foundation Programme had been noted and approved by Council.

USC/16-17/006   The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies had forwarded a query from a member in relation to data in the Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2015/16 to the Academic Registry who would respond. The data on degree grades had not been included in the Annual Report, but would be included in the Academic Registry report at a later stage.

USC/17-18/012   **Fitness to Study Policy**

A Policy on Fitness to Study had been circulated, together with a memorandum from the Dean of Students, dated 5 October 2017.

The Dean of Students reported that provision was given in the Statutes for a fitness to study policy, but that Trinity did not currently have one in place. The Deans' Consultation Group currently deals with fitness to study issues and its membership was broadly similar to the proposed Fitness to Study Advisory Group. The Consultation Group deals with critical issues that have been raised by College Officers about students. However, the Group is not widely known within the College community and does not have direct student representation. The proposed policy provides for direct student consultation in the process.

The Dean emphasised that the new policy is concerned with whether a student is fit to participate in College life; it is not limited to academic issues. The policy had received extensive input from the College Solicitor, Professor Eoin O'Dell from the School of Law, and Eversheds-Sutherland, an external legal firm with expertise in this area.

The Dean brought the meeting through the proposed 3-level decision making process and advised that local, flexible decisions would be made where possible. If a case has not been successfully brought to a conclusion at level 1, professional input would be sought via the Fitness to Study Advisory Group, who could also request outside professional input. Furthermore, if a case is not resolved after level 2, it could be brought to the Fitness to Study Panel. In cases where a student does not engage or comply with the process, it becomes a disciplinary matter and is brought to the Junior Dean.

In response to a member's query, the Dean outlined that the policy did not cover fitness to practice issues and noted that students would have to comply with both the fitness to practice and fitness to study policies. The fitness to study policy did not interact with the appeals process. Cases where a student goes off-books and requires a medical certificate to return to College would continue to be considered according to current procedures.

In response to a concern raised by a member, the role of the tutor in the process was clarified. Tutors are expected to support students through the fitness to study process with regard to communication and providing information, but would not advocate for students in the process. The Dean of Students confirmed that a student was entitled to engage outside legal representation in the level 2 and level 3 procedures.

The policy had been approved by the Student Life Committee and would shortly proceed to the Graduate Studies Committee for consideration before proceeding to Council.

It was agreed that the policy would be amended to incorporate details on scope and to provide definitions for added clarity. Subject to the amendments proposed at the meeting, USC recommended the policy be brought to Council for approval.

USC/17-18/013   **Laidlaw Undergraduate Research and Leadership Scholarship**

Ms Louise Williams, Trinity Teaching and Learning, was welcomed to the meeting for this item.

The Laidlaw scholarship is designed for undergraduate students to become leaders in academia or other sectors. The Laidlaw scholarship programme had already been introduced in six universities in the UK and will commence in Trinity and four other universities in 2018. The Scholarship will comprise a summer research project, a leadership development programme that will take place over weekends, and networking events throughout the year. During the research periods, students will receive a weekly stipend of up to €500. The process to select students will involve submission of an application form, a letter of personal motivation and a statement of support from a supervisor, followed by an interview.

Applications will be assessed on the student's leadership potential, academic record and supervisor's supporting statement. Ms Williams highlighted that the programme was aimed at gifted students who demonstrated leadership potential irrespective of their background.

Ms Williams showed the committee some profiles of students on the scholarship programme in other universities and highlighted the broad range of research topics involved. Members were invited to provide feedback on the role of the supervisor in the scholarship programme.

A member stated that he had been involved in the programme in the University of St Andrews where it had been very positively regarded. He noted that it would fit well with the focus on internships and research projects in the Trinity Education Project. A member raised a concern regarding the time commitment from supervisors, particularly over the summer, and the difficulty this could pose in recruiting supervisors.

The significant costs of lab-based research projects were discussed and it was noted that the expenses available for this were very small. However, the possibility of students working on a project alongside a PI could be investigated and this would ensure that a budget had already been secured.

Some members felt that the documentation on the scholarships did not seem to support the emphasis that the scholarships were available irrespective of students' background and believed that the requirement for potential and leadership could be seen to have an implicit bias. The Academic Secretary advised that the programme was not an access initiative, but noted that when she had met with students on the programme in Leeds University they had come from a range of backgrounds.   A member reported on another scholarship programme that included a statement on the impact the scholarship would make to a student as part of the selection criteria and it was noted that the personal statements could provide this information in the Laidlaw scholarship programme.

It was confirmed that the research element of the scholarship programme cannot be part of a student's credit-bearing academic workload. The programme would be available to Senior Fresh students in 2018 and is expected to run over a two year period.

A discussion took place around whether two research periods over two years was the most favourable model. This is the first year where the programme must be run over two years across all universities running the Laidlaw scholarships; prior to this, universities could choose whether to run it for one or two years. It was noted that Oxford University had managed to receive a dispensation to continue to run the programme over one year. Members noted that carrying out research for two summers could create a barrier to students hoping to go abroad and also that supervisors would likely prefer to have student support for 10-12 weeks compared with two summer periods of 5-6 weeks. The importance of determining whether one or two research periods would best suit our students was emphasised.

Details of the scholarship programme would be brought to Council for discussion and advertising of the programme would then begin.

USC/17-18/014   **Trinity Education Project**
a)   Guidelines for Student Workload and Assessment
The guidelines for student workload and assessment were circulated together with a memorandum from the Senior Academic Developer, dated 4 October 2017. The guidelines formed part of the work of the Pedagogy Sub-Group within TEP. The guidelines aim to assist academic staff in the evaluation of workload and assessment load of a module in the context of the new academic year structure, assessment framework, and semesterisation. The

Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies emphasised that the guidelines were a work in progress and input was being sought from USC.

The Senior Academic Developer spoke to the guidelines and advised that they were aimed at those who were redeveloping or designing modules in the context of TEP and also at programme directors who would have the overall view of a student's workload. Workload is defined as core teaching hours plus the time students spend on independent study, clinical attendance, non-directed study, etc. Assessment workload is the time it would take an "average student" to achieve a module's learning outcomes at the threshold level, but was only indicative as all students will spend differing amounts of time to achieve this. Workload and assessment load should be determined at subject-level and must be discussed within and across each year of study in order to have a clear picture of a student's overall workload.

In relation to essays and other forms of continuous assessment, it is seen as more useful to consider student workload by hours of input rather than words. The Senior Academic Developer wondered whether it would be useful to provide details on how current module workloads are devised in Trinity and on how assessment workloads are devised for different types of assessment. Members welcomed the idea of TEP developing a template that would estimate the average workload for a module including assessment.

In response to a member's comment and concern about the level of detail required in handbooks, the Senior Academic Developer confirmed that the detail given in course handbooks should be indicative of the level of workload involved and not prescriptive.

The guidelines provide details on what defines 5 and 10 ECTS modules and the student input involved. It was noted that a 10 ECTS credit module often involves a broadly similar level of assessment to a 5 ECTS credit module and a member noted that this could lead to students being more inclined to choose 10 ECTS credit modules.

Colleagues were asked to provide examples of good practice in modules and any additional feedback on the guidelines to ciara.ofarrell@tcd.ie. The Pedagogy Sub-group would look at the module examples that members provided in order to assist with completion of the proposed template.

b)   Internships and Mobility
A memorandum from the Academic Secretary and Dean of Students, dated 5 October 2017, was circulated. In June 2016, Council approved curriculum principles that included among other things, support for academic internships and student mobility. It had been proposed that all undergraduate programmes would make provision for both internships and mobility. However, no decision on this was made following Council's consideration. Definitions of an academic internship and student mobility had been noted by Council in April 2017 and were included in the circulated document.

The Internships & Careers, Student Exchanges/Mobility & Co-Curriculum Activities (Employability) subgroup had met on a number of occasions to devise a framework for internships and mobility. The subgroup recognised that imposing both internships and mobility on every programme, as considered by Council, could prove too challenging.   The subgroup was therefore proposing that courses offer either internships or mobility, or both internships and mobility, and was seeking the views of USC on this issue.

A member felt that it was too strong to mandate Schools to offer either internships or mobility and noted that some Schools would not be in a position to offer either. The Dean of Students agreed that internships may be difficult for some programmes to facilitate. He thought, however, that most programmes should be able to facilitate mobility and noted that in cases where this was not possible, it should be explicitly brought to the subgroup's

attention. The Academic Secretary emphasised the importance of looking at the situation in programmes with regard to mobility and internships and identifying any impediments that may exist.

A member raised the issue of mobility and internships from the perspective of their School which had a five-year programme and wondered when students on the programme would be in a position to study abroad. The Dean of Students noted that mobility and internship possibilities should be decided within Schools and not imposed at a higher level.

The student representative reported that students felt strongly that programmes should offer opportunities for mobility and internships.

Following consultation on the situation in individual programmes with regard to mobility and internships, the issue would return to USC for further discussion.

c)   Academic Year Structure, Supplemental and Special Examinations Transition Process,
A proposed schedule for supplemental and special examinations 2017/18 had been circulated together with a memorandum from the Director of Academic Registry, dated 5 October 2017. The Director of Academic Registry (AR) was welcomed to the meeting for this item.

The Director explained that the AR had engaged with IT Services in an impact analysis project to understand the impact of moving to the new academic year structure, and the impact that the new progression and awards regulations will have on key stages of the student life cycle. The proposed schedule for supplemental and special examinations had taken into consideration the current turnaround times for activities and processes, including responsibilities and workloads in Schools/Course Offices. School and Course Offices had been consulted and had requested that the supplemental and special examinations would be front-loaded as much as possible, in order to allow sufficient time for marking, mark-entry and further activities like appeals.

The proposed schedule recommended that the timing of supplemental examinations in 2018 should be brought forward with the objective that students who are required to undertake those examinations have their status for the 18/19 academic year confirmed as early as possible and as close to the start of the academic year as possible. As far as possible, the current turnaround time for each step had been maintained in order to reduce the burden on the College community while still being able to inform a student of their status at the earliest possible point.

Members felt that the proposal to hold supplemental examinations over a 7-day period would place an unfair burden on students.

By maintaining the current turnaround times, if a student has to take supplemental, followed by Court of First Appeals, followed by Academic Appeals and is then permitted to take Specials, it would be 3 weeks into the teaching term before the status of the student is known. The proposed schedule would reduce this period to 2.5 weeks.

It was clarified that the circulated documentation should refer to the Courts of Examiners in box 2 and Courts of First Appeal in box 3. The fourth box is the end date of Academic Appeals.

In response to a query, it was clarified that the academic year structure approved by Council would still be in place for 2018/19 onwards and that the proposed examination schedule related only to the transition year in 2017/18.

A member raised a concern in relation to external examining of scripts at a time in August when many examiners would be on holiday.   The TSM Course Director highlighted the additional challenge the proposed timetable would place on TSM and the tight deadlines this would place on Schools to submit results to the TSM Office.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies suggested that an alternative was to move the start of the Supplementals forward so that they would begin at an earlier date in August. This received mixed support. She also noted the tight turnaround time in relation to the start of the Special examinations and recommended that starting the Specials at the beginning week 3 would be more manageable.

In response to the query as to whether members would accept moving the beginning of the Supplemental period forward, members noted that external examiners may not be available earlier in the period should there be a problem with a question on a paper. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted the challenges and constraints of allowing sufficient time for the examination process whilst also confirming the status of students at a sufficiently early stage in the academic year. The Senior Tutor noted the importance of allowing sufficient time for academic appeals and noted that the Special Examination time period would need to be extended beyond that in the proposal.

AR would take into account feedback from USC and look further at the proposed schedule.

USC/17-18/015   CAO Admissions data 2017/18
This item was deferred due to a lack of time.

USC/17-18/016   Any other business
- The high level policy seminar of the Coimbra Group of universities, of which Trinity is a member, will take place in Trinity on 13- 14 November 2017. The theme is 'Internationalisation of the Curriculum'. Directors will be receiving an invitation to the seminar and are encouraged to attend some or all of the sessions.

- The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that papers will be circulated via Boardpad alongside the usual PDF circulation for the USC meeting on 21 November.

- A member raised a query regarding the relationship between Courts of Appeal and requests through Student Cases. He noted that sometimes a case that had been turned down in the Court of First Appeal would then be submitted to Student Cases. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that sometimes a student seeks a certain remedy through a Court of First Appeal and, if not successful, they may then seek a different remedy through Student Cases. In addition, it is possible that a student submits new evidence following the Court of First Appeal. She noted that cases that come through Student Cases are screened and the School/Discipline is consulted.

USC/17-18/017   Items for noting
USC noted the White Paper on Quality Assurance Guidelines on Blended Learning, together with a memorandum from the Quality Officer, dated 21 September 2017.