



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 21 November 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 Alice Jorgensen, School of English
 - 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 Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
 - Professor Naomi Elliott, School of Nursing and Midwifery
 - Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
 - 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 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 Alice Mac Pherson, Education Officer, Students’ Union
 - Ms Sally Anne McCarthy, Student Representative
- Apologies:**
- Professor Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
 - Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative
- In attendance:** Ms Elaine Egan, Trinity Teaching and Learning; Ms Marie McPeak, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Dr Alison Oldam, Director of Student Services; Mr Declan Treanor for USC/17-18/20; Ms Fedelma McNamara for USC/17-18/022e; Ms Leona Coady, Director of Academic Registry for USC/17-18/021 & USC/17-18/022a

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies opened the meeting with a noting of apologies and an introduction of the new Secretary, Ms Marie McPeak. The outgoing secretary, Ms Elaine Egan, was thanked for her work and support over the years. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed the new DUTL from Medicine, Professor Joseph Harbison.

USC/17-18/018 Minutes of the meeting of 10 October 2017

The minutes were approved.

USC/17-18/019 Matters arising

USC/16-17/065 & USC/16-17/073 The proposals for dual B.A. programmes with Columbia University in European Studies, History, and English were fully approved by Council at its meeting of 25 October 2017. The academic content of the proposal for the dual B.A. programme in Middle Eastern and European Languages and Cultures was also approved, although further documentation on resourcing has been sought. Board approved the legal contract at its meeting of 15 November 2017. The programmes will commence in 2018/19.

USC/17-18/003 A proposal for changes in the awarding of Entrance Exhibitions was approved by Council at its meeting of 25 October 2017 and was noted by Board at its meeting of 15 November 2017.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that from 2018/19, Entrance Exhibitions will be awarded to new entrants from the island of Ireland who achieve the highest points among Trinity entrants from their secondary school and who achieve a minimum of 500 points (including bonus points for maths). Students applying through the CAO who have taken second-level examinations in another EU/EEA country will be awarded Entrance Exhibitions on the basis of best in country amongst applicants to Trinity, where they have also achieved the minimum threshold of 500 points. A proposal to reduce the value of the Book Token was not approved and this will stay at €150. Consideration was being given to providing a plaque or framed photograph to Schools. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted the importance of communicating these changes to schools and noted that she would be involved in discussions with the Provost, the Registrar, and the Director of Public Affairs and Communications.

USC/17-18/016 The Coimbra Group high-level seminar on education policy had taken place the previous week. The theme of the seminar was 'Internationalisation of the Curriculum'. Key issues arising from the seminar were the need to define clearly the meaning of terms such as internationalisation and interculturalisation within the local context and to look beyond mobility for curriculum internationalisation: consideration should be given to how internationalisation can be embedded in the curriculum and through exploring other initiatives such as virtual mobility. The importance of learning from the experience of other institutions in the sector was emphasised.

USC/17-18/20 Reasonable Accommodation Policy for Students with Disabilities

A Policy on Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Disabilities had been circulated, together with a memorandum from the Director of the Trinity Disability Service, dated 14 November 2017. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the Policy would also be considered at the next meeting of the Graduate Studies Committee on 7 December 2017.

The Director of the Trinity Disability Service was welcomed to the meeting for this item.

The Director noted that extensive consultation with the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Dean of Graduate Studies had taken place. He reported that the aim of this policy is to bring together existing College guidelines, legislation and national policy in one place and to provide a framework for communication to stakeholders. The Director brought the meeting through the policy, providing definitions of the key terms and outlining the process for granting and managing standard and non-standard reasonable accommodations. The policy would ensure that College was compliant with the Equal Status Act, other relevant legislation, and best practice in the area. He explained the importance of a LENS report in establishing the supports a student may need while enrolled in College. He also emphasized the distinction between standard and non-standard reasonable accommodations and the processes involved in, for example, agreeing and disseminating

information on reasonable accommodations; and possible escalation, where there are concerns at local level about granting the accommodation.

Students with disabilities comprise 10% of the overall student population in Trinity and the Director noted that they often require a high level of support from disciplines and the Disability Service.

Members expressed concern on the wording of section 6.2, suggesting that it should be amended to reflect that the objectives of a student's course must be taken into account when deciding if an accommodation is reasonable.

A member noted the difficulty for certain subjects in ensuring lecture materials are available ahead of teaching and requested that a degree of flexibility should be included in the Policy. It was noted in response that the materials can be an outline of the lecture topic, rather than exact notes. The Director emphasised that where Schools have difficulty in granting standard reasonable accommodations, they may address this through the non-standard reasonable accommodation process.

In response to a concern that was raised by several members regarding the recording of lectures, the Director noted that lecture materials are owned by the University. Students with permission to record lectures have signed an agreement that any recordings are strictly for personal use. This is stated in the College Calendar. Students are further advised that where matters of a sensitive nature are discussed, recording should be suspended. In cases where a student is found to violate the agreement, it becomes a disciplinary matter and is brought to the Junior Dean. Members felt that lecturers may be hesitant to express themselves freely and that while lecture materials are owned by the university, the performance of the material is owned by the lecturer. Members also noted that recording may impact other students and that their consent should be sought in advance. The Director advised that he had sought legal advice regarding the ownership of teaching materials, but that he would seek further advice with regard to ownership of the teaching performance and would circulate this to members. The current guidelines on permitting students with a disability to record lectures would also be circulated.

The student representatives on the committee highlighted that there was a serious need for the Policy and that the Students' Union fully endorsed it.

The Director acknowledged that the appointment of an Academic Liaison Officer and the move from Sharepoint to SITs for the management of LENS reports will support the full implementation of the policy for 2018/19. The Director also confirmed that the impact of the Trinity Education Project, specifically the new academic year structure, on the rescheduling of examinations within session as a form of accommodation within this policy is under review.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies requested that the process of escalation, where the granting of a standard reasonable accommodation is contested, be articulated more clearly.

Subject to the amendments proposed at the meeting and clarification on the issue of ownership of lecture material vs. performance, USC recommended that the policy be brought to Council for approval.

USC/17-18/021 CAO Admissions Data 2017/18

A memorandum and appendices from the Admissions Officer, dated 4 October 2017, had been circulated.

The Director of Academic Registry (AR), was welcomed to the meeting for this item.

The Director highlighted a number of points in relation to the data. She noted that there had been a small increase in the 2017 figures in respect of the total number of applicants through the CAO for Level 8 courses in Irish Higher Education Institutions. A total of 18,624 students had mentioned Trinity as one or more of their CAO preferences, representing a slight increase over 2016/17. The total number of applications to courses in Trinity decreased slightly to 40,830 from 40,855 in 2016. The number of applicants who gave their first preference to Trinity increased by 4%.

In preparation for the Council-approved change to the Academic Year Structure that will shorten the amount of time available to fill places from 2018/2019, an additional 100 places had been offered during the 2017 admissions cycle over Round 1 in order to ensure as many Round 1 acceptances as possible. As a result, some courses had ended up over quota as of Round 1.

Whilst there was a 3% increase in the number of applications from Northern Ireland, the acceptance rate remained low. However, there had been a significant improvement over 2016/17 in the conversion of offers to acceptances for Northern Irish students, 91% versus 71% the previous year.

All 25 places of the Trinity Admissions Feasibility Study had been filled. This covers three programmes: Law, History, and Ancient and Medieval History and Culture.

Despite a reduction in applications from the HEAR Entry Route, overall admissions from non-traditional entry routes remained at 21% for 2017/2018. Trinity's Strategic Plan 2014-2019 has set the target of 25% in relation to enrolled students from widening participation groups for the academic year 2019/2020.

Members expressed concern regarding instances where course acceptances significantly exceeded quotas and noted the serious space implications that have arisen and the potential reputational risks. The committee agreed that a system should be established to ensure EU and non-EU quotas are monitored together so as to ensure that space issues which impact on teaching are identified. It was suggested that the Planning Group could engage with Faculties to consider overall quotas for courses.

The Director noted that the Academic Registry will produce an Annual Report in the new year that will include data that will be more comparable at a national level. Requests to include particular data in the report should be directed to Academic Registry immediately.

In response to a member's query, the Dean of Students acknowledged that the availability of accommodation is a driver in the acceptance rates for universities. The ability to offer students provisional campus accommodation early in the offers and acceptances process is under exploration.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reiterated the view of members that an Admissions Strategy, which would as part of its remit, provide co-ordination between CAO and non-EU Admissions, should be developed. She would also seek further clarification on the issue of agreeing non-EU student numbers.

USC/17-18/022 Trinity Education Project

a) Update on Academic Year Structure, Supplemental and Special Examinations Transition Process

A proposed schedule offering two options for supplemental and special examinations 2017/18 had been circulated from the Director of Academic Registry, dated 16 November

2017. Option A had been discussed at the previous Undergraduate Studies Committee, where it was agreed that an alternative should be explored.

The Director presented and compared the two options available for the Supplemental and Special Examinations 2017/18. Members favoured Option B due to the provision of two extra working days to support processing examination results and appeals processes. In response to a member's concern, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that where the agreed option is unsuitable to a course structure due to placements, derogations would need to be sought by the School as soon as possible.

Members queried the ability of examiners, staff and College services to support the proposed Supplemental examination timetable. The Director noted that examinations have been held on Saturday previously with little impact. The Director of Student Services noted that nurses were available at offsite examination sites in the past and that this may be a solution for this examination period should the College Health Centre be unable to open.

Members felt that the dates should be communicated as quickly as possible to students, it was noted the item must first be approved at the next meeting of Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) and then Council.

It was agreed that Option B should go forward for approval. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies will follow up on issuing provisional communication regarding dates for the Supplemental and Special examination period.

b) Update from the Pedagogy Group

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies provided an update from Sub-group 4: Pedagogy, which comprises 4 work packages: Assessment and Capstone Project, Graduate Attributes, Development and Delivery of Multi-disciplinary Modules, and Technology-enhanced Learning.

Student workload and assessment equivalences had been circulated at the last meeting on 10 October 2017. Several colleagues had subsequently submitted module outlines, following which a workshop had been held to review examples and templates. It is aimed to circulate a final document with advice on evaluating student workload and assessment before the end of the month. A mapping tool to enable colleagues at local level to review workload across years of a programme/subject will be included.

It is also planned to consolidate all TEP teaching resources into one document for ease of access. Members are asked to identify where there may be gaps in these resources.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies encouraged the use of Teach Meets within Schools to enable sharing of good practice and curricular innovations between colleagues and improve discussion around teaching. Teach Meets are already operating in the School of Computer Science and Statistics. In order to encourage more Schools to engage with this type of informal forum, TEP will provide funding for a sandwich lunch.

In response to a member's request for clearer guidelines on workload equivalences at the module level, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the document to be circulated will provide examples. In response to further queries raised by members it was noted that examples provided are not prescriptive, but will support local reflection and development of equivalences within Schools.

c) Academic Year Structure, Realignment of Council Approved Examinations

A document from the Director of Academic Registry (AR) had been circulated, dated 17 November 2017.

The Director brought the meeting through the process of mapping examinations with derogations from 2017/2018 to the new Academic Year Structure from 2018/2019 where formal examinations will take place during the week before Christmas. This process excludes Medicine and Dentistry courses which will continue to hold examinations outside the three sessions due to issues with accreditation.

Schools and programmes are asked to begin considering the implications which the new academic year structure and assessment weeks may have on their programmes. The formal request for this information will be sent in January with an absolute deadline for return in March.

In response to a member's query on whether it would be necessary for External Examiners to visit twice in an academic year, it was noted that arrangements for external examiners will be discussed as part of the next meeting in January.

Where a query arose in relation to the submission of Semester 1 assessments during Semester 2, it was confirmed that assessment deadlines should not be later than the final day of examinations in that semester.

It was suggested that if the assessment of placements and exchanges are impacted by the new academic year structure, members should contact Fedelma McNamara to discuss.

d) Progression & Awards – New Proposal for the Award of a Gold Medal, memorandum from Chair, TEP Subgroup 6

A memorandum from the Chair, TEP Subgroup 6: Progression and Awards, Fixed Timetable, Learning Spaces Design had been circulated, dated 17 November 2017.

The Chair noted that the Subgroup had undertaken a review of existing regulations and, on foot of this exercise, had developed two models, which had subsequently been circulated to Schools. The Subgroup was of the view that Gold Medals should be awarded on the basis of the final, overall degree award, which will be calculated on a 30/70 basis over the final two years. All attempts at assessment, including Semester 1, Semester 2, reassessment and deferrals, may be counted towards the award of a Gold Medal.

Initial feedback from Schools was mainly positive and the Chair was now presenting the same two options to USC for discussion and feedback.

Programmes could choose the model deemed most appropriate. Model 1 allows programmes to recommend the award of a Gold Medal based on the overall degree award mark with the programme setting the minimum overall degree mark at either 70%, 75% or 80%. The alternative model would allow the recommendation of a Gold Medal to be based on the overall degree award mark with a minimum overall degree mark set at either 70% or 75% or 80%, and an agreed minimum percentage in each subject/discipline.

A number of members felt that allowing reassessment due to failure to count towards the award of a Gold Medal would be unfair to students who were deemed ineligible for a Gold Medal as a result of performance at the first sitting. Other members expressed that the achievement of learning overall was more important than the timing of that achievement.

This item will return to the Subgroup for further discussion based on the feedback from this meeting prior to a proposal being brought to the TEP Steering Committee.

e) Progression & Awards – Derogations from Council Approved Regulations

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies had been circulated, dated 21 November 2017. The Chair apologised for the late circulation of this document.

Following approval of the new progression and awards regulations by Council in May 2017, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer had written to all Schools confirming that the new regulations would be introduced for all students in the 2018/19 academic year, with the exception of the 30:70 calculation of the degree award, which will apply only to new entrants to the new programme architecture in 2018/19. Schools were asked to confirm in writing that planning for the application of each of the new progression regulations to undergraduate programmes would commence early in Michaelmas term.

Schools with professional or clinical programmes had been asked to confirm that there was no external barrier imposed by the accrediting body in relation to implementation of the new regulations. On foot of this request, a number of submissions for derogations had been received. These were presented in the attached documents.

One School had indicated that it is currently redesigning its curricula in response to external requirements and cannot confirm requests for derogation at this time.

One member queried if it was appropriate to submit old module codes when they are likely to obtain new modules codes as a result of the redesign. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies recommended that present module information should be submitted for the purpose of awarding derogations.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies requested that where details were outstanding or required amendment, members should revert to trinityeducationproject@tcd.ie as soon as possible to go forward to the next meeting of Council on 29 November 2017. She also noted that it is likely that there will be a follow-up document detailing outstanding derogation requests which will go to the January meeting of Council.

USC/17-18/023 Minutes

USC noted the following minutes:

1. Royal Irish Academy of Music, Associated College Degrees Committee, dated 1 February 2017 and 31 May 2017

USC/17-18/024 Items for noting

USC noted the following items:

1. Trinity Response to QQI on Blended Learning QA White Paper
2. Trinity Week 2019, Memorandum from the Registrar, dated 24 October 2017