



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

XX = Item is of
significance to
Council

A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 22 January 2019 at 2.15pm in the Boardroom.

Present: Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Professor Kevin O'Kelly, Dean of Students
Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor
Professor Aine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education
Professor Kristian Myrseth, School of Business
Professor Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Alan O'Connor, School of Engineering
Professor Alice Jorgensen, School of English
Professor Frank Wellmer, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Elizabeth Nixon, School of Psychology
Professor Vladimir Dotsenko, School of Mathematics
Professor Paul Eastham, School of Physics
Professor Valerie Smith, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Christine Poulter, School of Creative Arts
Professor Michael Wycherley, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Peter Crooks, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Philip Curry, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Stephen Matterson, Director of TSM
Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor Paula Colavita, School of Chemistry
Professor Linda Hogan, School of Religion
Professor Ailbhe O'Neill, School of Law
Ms Aimee Connolly, Education Officer, Students' Union
Ms Misha Fitzgibbon, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Stephen Minton, School of Education
Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan, Academic Affairs Office, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Developer, CAPSL, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary; Professor Frances O'Brien, Director of International Initiatives, School of Nursing and Midwifery, for item USC/18-19/043

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies opened the meeting and noted apologies from members. He welcomed Ms Linda Darbey, the Assistant Academic Secretary, as an attendee to the meeting.

USC/18-19/041 Minutes of the meeting of 11 December 2018
The minutes were approved.

USC/18-19/042 Matters arising

USC/18-19/032 The proposed entry routes from FET courses were approved at the Council meeting of 16 January 2019. Council also approved 'Maths for STEM' as a Higher Leaving Certificate equivalent for the purpose of alternative entry routes by the School of Mathematics, the School of Engineering, and the School of Computer Science and Statistics.

USC/18-19/034 At its meeting of 16 January 2019, Council was informed of the discussion on the ISSE report that had taken place at the previous meeting of USC. Council agreed that the data provided in the survey had merit and it was decided that Schools would look closely at their data and provide a response outlining steps to make improvements where necessary. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies will send Schools a template for completion.

USC/18-19/035 The request for a derogation to the Progression and Awards Regulations from the School of Nursing and Midwifery was approved by Council at its meeting of 16 January 2019.

USC/18-19/0037 The proposed Trinity Electives were approved at the Council meeting of 16 January 2019.

USC/18-19/043 ECTS Accreditation for International School, revised proposal from School of Nursing and Midwifery**XX**

A memorandum, dated 16 January 2019, from the Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning and the Director of International Initiatives in the School of Nursing and Midwifery had been circulated together with a revised proposal. The circulated proposal for ECTS accreditation for the International School had been updated in response to comments received at the previous meeting of USC. Professor Frances O'Brien, Director of International Initiatives, School of Nursing and Midwifery, attended the meeting to speak to the item and she highlighted the amendments that had been made.

The assessment of the proposed International School had been updated to include a 500-word reflective writing piece. The Director confirmed that current partner institutions could accept and convert the 5 ECTS credits for their students and that while potential partners had expressed an interest in receiving credit, whether they could accept it would ultimately be decided by the partner institutions. She had consulted with the Academic Registry who had confirmed that they could apply the credit for the International School and provide a transcript for students. The start date for the programme had been amended to May 2019.

It was noted at the meeting that, in order to comply with TEP progression and award regulations on compensation, the separate components should not be graded as pass/fail. Instead, these can be given a percentage grade and the entire module can be graded as pass/fail by combining these marks. In the event that a student fails the module, only the failed components (based on these individual percentages) should be reassessed.

USC agreed that the amendments addressed the concerns raised at the previous meeting and approved the proposal subject to the agreed change in marking.

Decisions

USC/18-19/043.1 The marking structure for the module would be amended to comply with TEP regulations.

USC/18-19/043.2 USC approved the proposal to award 5 ECTS credits for the International School in the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

USC/18-19/044 Trinity Admissions Feasibility Study

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 16 January 2019, had been circulated together with a report dated 20 June 2018 and an interim report dated 31 January 2015. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the University Council at its meeting of 20 June 2018 had approved a proposal to continue the Trinity Admissions Feasibility Study (TAFS) for entry in 2019/20, but a decision about the study's future had not been made.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies explained that the feasibility study had been designed to explore alternative ways of admitting students to university rather than solely relying on Leaving Certificate points. The three modalities used to assess applicants to the study were the applicants' Leaving Certificate points, their relative performance rank (RPR) in relation to other pupils in their school who had applied to any course through the CAO, and a personal statement. Following a decision by Council in October 2015, the personal statement was thereafter used as a qualifier only, with entry to the study then based solely on an equal weighting of Leaving Certificate points and RPR. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that reading the personal statements had proven to be very time consuming and obtaining the RPR data from the CAO was expensive and that these time and cost constraints had implications for the scalability of the study.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies further noted that the IUA's Task Group on the Reform of University Selection and Entry (TGRUSE) had been reactivated and that part of its mandate was to investigate whether the Leaving Certificate was fit for purpose as the sole entry route to university.

USC was invited to consider the following options and recommend one to Council for approval:

- (i) To discontinue the admissions route explored within the TAFS.
- (ii) To adopt this admission route using only Leaving Certificate points and the RPR for:
 - a. The existing programmes in the Study
 - b. A wider range of programmes (to be agreed with Schools)
 - c. All undergraduate programmes.

In the discussion a member noted the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of the feasibility study as outcome measures had not been defined at the study's outset. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that data from the study on grades, graduation routes and the profile of schools involved could be used as outcome measures. Data on the school profile of those who were admitted through TAFS compared to the school profile for overall Trinity enrolment showed that while profiles were largely similar, a higher proportion of students from fee-paying Schools entered through TAFS. Members noted that one purpose of the study had been to attract students who would not have gained entry to College via the traditional CAO route but the data shows that most students admitted through TAFS would actually have gained entry via the CAO.

Taking into account the points raised in the discussion, the potential for diversification of the student body offered by the new QQI FET entry routes, and the mandate of TGRUSE, members concluded that entry to TAFS should be discontinued (the last year of entry being 2019/20). It was agreed that Trinity should feed data from TAFS into the work being carried out by TGRUSE.

Action

USC/18-19/044.1 It was agreed that data from TAFS would be provided to TGRUSE.

Decision

USC/18-19/044.2 USC would recommend to Council that TAFS be discontinued (the last year of entry being 2019/20).

USC/18-19/045 Chair's Report: Trinity Education Project, update on curriculum mapping

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Directors for the curriculum mapping data which had been received for the majority of programmes. There was a considerable volume of data which was being considered by the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Trinity Teaching and Learning, and the TEP team. Once the initial analysis had taken place, there would be an idea of the streams, majors and minors available. This data will then feed into the timetabling exercise. Any issues or queries with the data will be raised with Schools.

USC/18-19/046 Proposals for Trinity Electives**XX**

A memorandum dated 17 January 2019 had been circulated together with three Trinity Elective proposals. The Associate Dean of Science Education spoke to this item. She advised that 32 Trinity Electives had been approved; 10 of these would start in 2020/21 and 22 in 2019/20. The 32 electives included multiple languages which had been counted as one elective in these figures. She introduced the three proposals that had been circulated.

She also requested approval for a title change for two of the previously approved electives as follows: from 'A World to Discover: Travel Writing at Trinity' to 'A World to Discover: Travel Memoirs and Memorabilia at Trinity'; from 'Impact Evaluation for Economic Development' to 'Impact Evaluation for Global Development'. USC approved the proposed title changes.

In response to a query on the enrolment process, the Associate Dean advised that students would be enrolled online and that certain groups would be prioritised, e.g. students in the JS year where it contributes to the final award. A member noted that to comply with the agreement for the Columbia Dual Degree programmes, students from Columbia Arts programmes were required to take a Science elective and would therefore need prioritisation. The Associate Dean noted that requirements of these students were being considered within the algorithm.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies emphasised that Trinity Electives must be given the same significance as other modules and students should be encouraged to take them seriously. In response to a query, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that students will choose their Trinity Electives independently but they may need guidance from disciplines on choosing Approved Modules. He noted that students would also need advice on choosing their pathway through programmes. The TEP team was looking at establishing an office along the lines of the Science Course Office that could advise individual students on the most appropriate pathways. The diets would be embedded in the enrolment system so that pathways would show up as available or unavailable to students.

In response to a query regarding reassessment of a Trinity Elective, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that students had a right to reassessment but that the modality of assessment could be different from the first time. Where a module was assessed by group work, lecturers should be aware that an alternative mode of assessment would be required in cases of failure.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted that the Broad Curriculum programme would cease after 2018/19 and the Trinity Electives would commence in 2019/20. Students that were eligible to take a Broad Curriculum course would be required to take a Trinity Elective instead. It was noted that for students who are repeating off-books and fail a Broad Curriculum course, a special examination would need to be taken, even in cases where the Broad Curriculum course had ceased.

The Associate Dean noted that students who failed a year and had to repeat a Trinity Elective

would not be automatically permitted to repeat the same elective but would be considered in the same quota system as other students. She informed the meeting that capacity was being looked at and that in 2019/20 capacity was expected to meet demand. Capacity for 2020/21 appeared to be more limited but the Trinity Electives subgroup of TEP Features was working with module coordinators to ensure adequate capacity in time for 2020/21.

In response to comments from a member, it was agreed that a couple of minor amendments would be made to the 'Design Thinking' proposal. USC approved the three Trinity Elective proposals.

Decisions

USC/18-19/046.1

Subject to the above minor amendments to the 'Design Thinking' proposal, USC approved the circulated proposals.

USC/18-19/046.2

USC approved the following title changes:

from 'A World to Discover: Travel Writing at Trinity' to 'A World to Discover: Travel Memoirs and Memorabilia at Trinity';

from 'Impact Evaluation for Economic Development' to 'Impact Evaluation for Global Development'.

USC/18-19/047 Widening Participation Group

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 16 January 2019, had been circulated.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) Steering Committee, a sub-committee of USC, had been established in the early 1990's in order to support the work of TAP in widening access to the university for young adults and adults from low socio-economic backgrounds. In May 2017, USC approved a proposal to replace the TAP Steering Committee with a Widening Participation Group that would represent a wider cohort of underrepresented students, including students with a disability and mature students. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies proposed to the committee that this Group be established as a sub-committee of the USC with minutes of their meetings being circulated to USC. The proposed terms of reference and membership of the Group had been circulated for the meeting. USC approved the establishment of the Group as a sub-committee of USC and approved the proposed terms of reference.

USC agreed with a member's suggestion that the Group provide an annual report to USC to allow for fuller discussion of issues.

A discussion took place around the membership of the Group and it was agreed that the following changes would be made to the proposed membership: the Students' Union Disabilities Officer and the Students' Union Mature Students Officer would be added to the membership and would replace the Students' Union Education Officer as a member of the Group. It was agreed that one Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning from each faculty would be represented on the Group.

Decisions

USC/18-19/047.1 The Students' Union Disabilities Officer and the Students' Union Mature Students Officer would be added to the membership and would replace the Students' Union Education Officer as a member of the Group.

USC/18-19/047.2 USC approved the establishment of the Widening Participation Group as a sub-committee of USC.

USC/18-19/047.3 It was agreed that the Widening Participation Group would submit an annual report to USC.

USC/18-19/048 Any other business

a) Marking query

A member queried the reassessment process for a student who failed an examination with a mark of 35-39% and who due to ill health had deferred other examinations to the reassessment session. It would not yet be known by the reassessment session whether the student could compensate for the failed mark and the member wondered whether a student should present for reassessment in the failed module. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies clarified that unless the failed mark was raised by the Court of Examiners, the student would be required to sit a reassessment in the failed module.

b) Conduct of examinations

Members advised that they had received a number of complaints from students regarding the recent assessment session. Some students had felt overloaded with the number of examinations they had over a short time period. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the Academic Registry were looking at the conduct of the assessment session and would prepare a report outlining the lessons that had been learnt and the improvements that would be made to future sessions. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, ADUSE and Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer would meet with students in an open forum on 30 January 2019 to discuss students' concerns.

Some members highlighted the pressure on students when continuous assessment work was due at the end of semester when this was also the time students needed to prepare for examinations. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reminded members that continuous assessment was encouraged as a formative way to assess students and was intended as an alternative method of assessing students, not as an extra component to examinations. It was noted in the discussion that although the possibility of moving the deadline for continuous assessments to the first week in January had previously been considered and rejected, the option should be thoroughly explored again. A member noted that feedback in her School had indicated a fall-off in attendance when continuous assessment deadlines were set early in the semester. A member advised that Assessment Fellows had recently taken up position and would work with Schools to look at curricula, and the timing, content and mode of assessments.

Members also raised concerns with the tight turnaround time between the end of the assessment period and the processing of results through Courts of Examiners and the appeals process. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thought that the pressure in this period would be lighter as special examinations had been discontinued. It was noted that fourth year students in 2018/19 had not signed up to these regulations when they first entered College yet they were still affected by the changes to the academic year structure.

A member asked the committee to accept that teething problems were always likely and to recognise that important lessons had been learnt that would lead to improvements in future assessment sessions. Further information on the impact of the revisions to assessment would become available from external examiner feedback and from monitoring the trends in student performance.

It was agreed that a full discussion on conduct of examinations would take place at the next meeting of USC.

USC/18-19/049 Items for Noting

There were no items for noting.