



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 26 March 2019 at 2.15pm in the Boardroom.

Present: Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
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 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 Nicholas Johnson, School of Creative Arts
Professor Michael Wycherley, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
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 Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Ailbhe O'Neill, School of Law
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Stephen Minton, School of Education
Professor Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor Paula Colavita, School of Chemistry
Ms Misha Fitzgibbon, Student Representative
Ms Aimee Connolly, Education Officer, Students' Union

Apologies: Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor
Professor Aine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education
Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
Professor Kevin O'Kelly, Dean of Students
Professor Linda Hogan, School of Religion

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan, Academic Affairs Office, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Head of Academic Practice, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Professor Andrew Bowie, Associate Dean of Research, for item USC/18-19/060; Professor Rachel Moss, Department of History of Art, for item USC/18-19/062; Ms Leona Coady, Director of Academic Registry, for item USC/18-19/063

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies opened the meeting and noted apologies from members.

USC/18-19/058 Minutes of the meeting of 19 February 2019

A member requested that the minutes be amended to record a comment he had made on the importance of learning from our experiences of the conduct of Semester 1 exams in order to ensure that these irregularities are not repeated in Semester 2 exams and also to anticipate and prevent irregularities in supplemental exams that are conducted under more serious time pressure for students and staff.

The minutes were approved and would be amended to incorporate this comment.

USC/18-19/059 Matters arising

USC/18-19/052 The Timetabling policy and procedures were approved by Council at its meeting of 20 March 2019.

USC/18-19/053 a, b, c At its meeting of 20 March 2019, Council approved the following proposals:

- History of Art and Architecture new single honors programme
- Chemistry with Biosciences, new moderatorship option from Chemical Sciences TR061
- Engineering / UM-SJTU Joint Institute, articulation route into the 4th year

USC/18-19/055 At its meeting of 20 March 2019, Council noted and approved the name change from moderatorship in Plant Sciences to moderatorship in Botany, for students entering their Junior Sophister year of TR071 in 2019/20.

USC/18-19/060 Capstone Project – definition and criteria**XX**

The definition and criteria of the capstone project were circulated together with a memorandum dated 27 February 2019 from the Associate Dean of Research and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education, Chair of Workstream #3 TEP Features. The Dean of Research, Professor Andrew Bowie, attended the meeting for this item.

The Associate Dean thanked Directors for carrying out the survey on current practice around final year projects. The survey results had provided an understanding of the format and scope of current final year projects and also information on the readiness of Schools to implement a 20 ECTS credit capstone.

The definition of a final year research project had been expanded to ensure it encompassed all current activities. The definition makes reference to the aspects of commonality, the 20 ECTS credit weighting, the intensive research required by students, originality of work and also encompasses the four graduate attributes.

Quality control measures that drew on existing measures had been established. As in other academic matters, the Head of School would have ultimate responsibility for academic elements of the capstone. The external examiner report forms and quality review process for schools would be amended to encompass the capstone. New undergraduate course proposals must outline how the capstone project will fit into the programme.

With reference to two of the graduate attributes, a member queried whether it was actually possible to assess acting responsibly and developing continuously. In response, it was agreed that the wording would be amended to indicate that the capstone would provide opportunity for the development of graduate attributes and individual attributes would not be enumerated.

A member noted that the notion of original work can differ across academic areas and requested that this be noted in the document. Members noted that in some Schools,

research projects are carried out over two years and it was agreed that points vi and vii on page 7 of the circulated document would be amended to take account of this.

USC endorsed the definition and criteria of the capstone project, subject to the minor amendments agreed at the meeting.

Decision

USC/18-19/060.1 USC endorsed the capstone project definition and criteria for consideration by Council.

Action

USC/18-19/060.2 The documentation would be revised to incorporate amendments agreed at the meeting.

USC/18-19/061 Assessment loads in the new academic year structure

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 12 February 2019, had been circulated.

Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Head of Academic Practice, Trinity Teaching and Learning, spoke to this item. Feedback had been received from staff and students with regard to calibrating students' workload in respect of examinations and continuous assessment. Dr O'Farrell spoke about how an academic may only have a view of assessment in their particular module rather than in the overall programme. When assessment tasks are developed independently, students can be overburdened with assessment. She referenced research carried out in 2016 that had looked at the amount of assessment involved in 5 and 10 ECTS credit modules in Irish institutions and had shown that the amount of assessment in each was very similar. She acknowledged that the research had only looked at the amount of assessment, rather than the extent of each assessment, but cautioned that College should be mindful that the assessment load should be much lower when moving from 15 and 10 ECTS modules to 5 ECTS modules. Members felt that only looking at amount of assessment and not assessment type was not an accurate measurement.

A tool had been developed that allows assessment to be mapped for a module to show the amount, type, range, workload and timing of assessment over the span of a year, a programme, or a subject, as appropriate. Assessment Fellows and Assistants were currently assisting six Schools in mapping assessment in this way. Assessment Assistants enter the assessment data for modules which will then be fine-tuned by module owners. Mapping across a programme or subject year would usually focus on one or two aspects, e.g. the timing or range of assessments. Mapping across all years of a programme was reported to be somewhat problematic at the time.

Similarly, mapping across subject combinations was difficult and the current position in a joint honors programme was that each subject was being mapped separately and this would then be used as a catalyst for a conversation between subjects. The difficulty in coordinating this in subjects with a large volume of combinations was acknowledged.

Assessment Fellows may work within their own Schools, or with other Schools. Schools were invited to contact the Head of Academic Practice if they wished Assessment Fellows to assist with reviewing assessment in their area.

A member reflected on how the nature of programmes was changing with TEP and how some programmes are no longer a cohesive whole but rather comprised many different components that could be considered more of a track than a programme. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged this and noted that the mapping exercise may be most useful in the third and fourth year of programmes.

A member noted the importance of monitoring assessment information over the next few years with the implementation of TEP. A member reported that her School had previously carried out an assessment mapping exercise that had shown the main issue for students to be competing deadlines for submitting work. Another member commented that their School incorporates staff workload into their own assessment mapping process which had proven to be a very effective way of managing workload for both staff and students.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted the importance of ensuring that assessment was not increased by the introduction of smaller modules. He observed that students may not put their focus on modules with a low level of assessment and that this can encourage module coordinators to set higher levels. He invited members to consider the issue of students having too much assessment alongside the danger of students not engaging or differentially engaging if some parts of a programme de-emphasise final exams. He acknowledged that having too many continuous assessments will also lead to a heavy student workload. He invited members to consider a January deadline for assignments to allow students time to study for exams.

Members felt that it was worthwhile to look at extending the deadline for assignments to early January. This would allow staff the time to grade the work and submit marks on time for provisional Semester 1 results. However, it would also mean that visiting students who are in Trinity for one semester only would have an assignment due after they had left and it might put pressure on Irish students leaving Trinity for their second semester.

Members raised concerns against creating imbalance between the two semesters which would be contrary to the TEP regulations. The possibility of looking at the extent of assessment rather than timing was suggested, along with the possibility of looking at the timing of marking and exam boards. A member suggested considering using the week following the examination period for submission of work and it was agreed that this should be given consideration.

A member noted that there was more freedom around the timing of assessment in modules that spanned both semesters rather than modules held in a single semester. He noted that his School was piloting student-led flexibility around deadlines where students had been asked to select a deadline that best suited them from a range of proposed weeks. The pilot was working well with students who had a large project in the final weeks choosing an earlier deadline for submitting assignments.

The assessment mapping exercise is time-consuming and realistically will not have been completed for many programmes over the next few years. The importance of looking at interim measures for these programmes was emphasised. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that issues around assessment would continue to be monitored over the next months and years to ensure that students were not being unduly burdened.

USC/18-19/062 a) Proposal for a dual B.A. programme with Columbia University in History of Art and Architecture

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A course proposal for a dual degree programme with Columbia University in History of Art and Architecture from the School of History and Humanities had been circulated. Professor Rachel Moss, Head of Department, Department of History of Art and Architecture, indicated that the dual programme built on the single honors course in the History of Art and Architecture that had been recommended by USC and subsequently approved by Council at its meeting on 20 March 2019. The dual degree would allow for a further seven students to take part in the History of Art and Architecture programme.

As per the usual structure of dual degrees with Columbia, students would spend the first two years in Trinity followed by two years in Columbia and would graduate with a Trinity B.A. in History of Art and Architecture and a B.A. from Columbia with a major in either Art History, History and Theory of Architecture, or Art History and Visual Arts.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that Council, at its meeting on 20 March 2019, had requested that USC consider resources and staffing when considering course proposals, which represented a deviation from the previous remit to consider academic robustness only. Professor Moss indicated that the intake of additional students would facilitate the hiring of two new staff members. The positions would commence in 2020/21 for three years and would likely progress to tenure track. It was anticipated that another post would come on stream in the fourth year. She advised that modules had been reworked which ensured that the number of new modules was not commensurate with extra teaching hours.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that Trinity Teaching and Learning had advised that some details would need to be filled out prior to circulation to Council.

b) Request for derogations, History of Art and Architecture

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A memorandum from Head of Department, History of Art and Architecture, dated 21 March 2019 had been circulated.

To facilitate the delivery of the dual degree programme and meet the requirements of the Trinity and Columbia curricula and the award of two degrees, derogations were requested as follows:

- A derogation from the requirement that 60 ECTS are taken in Subject One in the Junior Freshman year under the single subject common architecture that would allow students on the dual degree programme to take 10 ECTS of language modules in their first year to meet the foreign language requirement of the Columbia Core Curriculum; as a result, students would complete 50 ECTS in Subject One in the Junior Freshman year.
- A derogation from the 30:70 calculation of degree award that would permit the calculation of the BA (moderatorship) classification to be based on results from the final two years at Columbia University and the results from the additional Trinity Sophister-level modules (60 ECTS) to be added together on a two-thirds to one-third basis, respectively.

Decision

USC/18-19/062.1 USC recommended the proposal for a dual B.A. programme with Columbia University in History of Art and Architecture to Council.

USC/18-19/062.2 USC approved the derogations for the dual degree programme.

USC/18-19/063 Academic Registry Annual Report 2017/18

The Academic Registry Annual Report 2017/18 had been circulated. The Director of Academic Registry attended the meeting to speak to this item.

The Annual Report was divided into three parts: an overview of the Academic Registry (AR), a summary of services delivered, and appendices with data. The Director brought the meeting through some key points in the report and highlighted the strategic initiatives in which the AR had been involved. She briefed the meeting on the KPIs of the AR and noted that most of them had been met. The AR had worked very hard to improve staff turnover and this had led to stabilisation of staff retention.

There had been a 2.5% increase from the previous year in student numbers with a ratio of 85:15 for Non-EU:EU and 59:41 for female:male. The 10% increase in non-EU numbers was

thought to be largely due to the Global Relations Strategy. The number of CAO applications had largely been static but there had been an increase in first preferences to Trinity. The number of applications and enrolments to the International Foundation Programme which was now run by Marino Institute of Education had risen from last year and the number of students progressing to degree programmes had risen by 76%.

The student finance section had previously been under-resourced and inadequately structured and following a review in 2018 had been restructured and allocated additional resources. The Director referred to an issue with collecting fees from US students that the IUA is currently addressing with Federal Student Aid (FSA).

She highlighted the increases in the number of exams and term tests and also the significant drop (41%) in special exams since 2016/17. There had been a 4.7% increase in first class and second class first division awards since the previous year. A 96% retention rate had been achieved which exceeded the 90% target set by the Strategic Plan 2014-19.

She advised that due to the new academic year structure it had not been possible to produce the report in January but that the report would be submitted to USC in January of future years.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commended the Director and other AR staff for the report and their work implementing many of the changes arising from TEP.

Members were invited to comment and the following points were noted in the discussion: FTSE breakdown data is captured at a module level by School managers who can manipulate the data to ensure it accurately reflects the reality of teaching on a programme. A member commented that the email account for coordinating queries on Erasmus did not appear to be sufficiently resourced and responses were frequently delayed; the Director undertook to investigate this. It was noted that high attrition of AR staff had led to a loss of institutional knowledge and that the promotion system for administrative staff may have an impact on this. A member noted that while the level of student cases for undergraduates had remained steady, the level for postgraduate students had risen significantly.

The discussion highlighted the 23% increase in exam accommodations which was thought to reflect the increase in the numbers of students registering with the Disability Service. It was noted that the Disability Service had introduced a standard disability model and that the reported increase may include students who need extra time for exams and not just the more onerous accommodations. The importance of monitoring the impact on space when a large number of students need small or separate exam rooms was highlighted. Members noted that it was impossible for academic staff to attend all exam venues due to the spread of venues however, the Director advised that both the RDS and Trinity venues were required to allow for all disability accommodations. A member referred to the complicated system in place for disseminating LENS reports and requested that the reports be sent directly to the module leader. In response to this comment, the Director of Student Services agreed that this was the best approach and noted the work being carried out to advance Module Manager in order to facilitate the request.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Director of AR for presenting the report and enquired whether future reports might present data over a 5-year period to allow for trends to be monitored. The Director advised that the report would be amended to incorporate USC's feedback.

USC/18-19/064 Request for changes to the admission requirements for Middle Eastern and European Languages and Cultures programme

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A memorandum from Dr Rachel Hoare, DUTL, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies, dated 12 March 2019, had been circulated. The School requested to amend the language element of the admissions requirement for the Middle Eastern and European Languages and Cultures (MEELC) programme as follows:

From: 'Applicants must present at least one European language other than English or Irish'
To: 'Applicants must present at least one language other than English or Irish'.

The DUTL advised that applicants to the course may have studied a non-European language and that this should be recognised for admissions purposes. Students on the programme can study both a European language and a Middle Eastern language *ab initio* and must therefore be able to demonstrate ability in language acquisition but this need not be limited to European languages.

USC approved the amendment to the admissions requirements for consideration by Council.

Decision

USC/18-19/064 USC recommended the changes to the admission requirements for Middle Eastern and European Languages and Cultures from 2020/21 for consideration by Council.

USC/18-19/065 Internal transfer deadlines

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 28 February 2019, had been circulated. At its meetings of 20 March 2018, USC had approved changes to the timelines for the processing of internal Junior Freshman transfer requests. Those changes had been proposed due to the introduction of the new academic year structure in 2018/19.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies outlined that following a High Court case in September 2018, the State Examinations Commission had revised the timelines for the publication of results of Leaving Certificate appeals. In previous years re-check results were published in the first week in October; in 2019 these will be released during the week commencing 16 September.

This change in the Leaving Certificate Appeals process provides an opportunity to look at the JF internal transfer application deadline again. Internal transfers cannot be processed until the CAO season has closed. Under the current timeframe, students receive decisions on their transfer requests in Week 7 of Teaching Term. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies asked USC to consider moving the transfer application deadline from the end of Week 4 in Teaching Term to the end of Week 2. Students would then receive their decision in Week 4, rather than Week 7.

A lengthy discussion took place with two main schools of thoughts emerging: 1) that the earlier deadline should be supported as it would benefit students' learning to begin their new course earlier and 2) that the proposed deadline is too close to the start of term and may not allow time for a student to engage with their tutor or to have sufficient time in their programme to allow them to make a considered decision on whether they should transfer to another programme.

The committee agreed to request figures on the number of internal transfers and a breakdown of how many of these were due to students taking up a new CAO offer versus how many were due to students deciding they would prefer to study a different programme. This item will be discussed further at a future meeting of USC.

Action

USC/18-19/065 USC will request details on the number of, and reasons for, internal transfers and will further consider the proposal at a future meeting.

USC/18-19/066 Internships and Placements Policy

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A draft Internships and Placements Policy had been circulated. Ms Orla Bannon, Director of Careers Services, was welcomed to the meeting for this item.

The policy arose out of the work of TEP subgroup 5 and its purpose was to provide a framework and guidelines for internships and placements. Consultation had taken place with Schools and the policy reflects their input. An insurance issue arose that had delayed the policy for a number of months but has now been resolved.

The policy encompasses internships and placements for credit that form part of a student's programme, internships for credit that students have sourced, and internships that are not-for-credit but have been approved by a School as complementing a student's programme. The policy clearly outlines the responsibilities of all parties involved in an internship/placement. The policy was circulated with a sample internship agreement and a sample learning agreement. A set of health and safety and insurance guidance documents that would support the policy were being prepared.

Members were asked to comment on the draft policy. A member commented that the status of a Trinity supervisor in the policy was vague and Ms Bannon undertook to look into this. In addition, it was agreed that the wording around credit-bearing and non credit-bearing would be made clearer.

It was noted that details of students participating in internships were kept at a local level and a discussion took place as to whether this information should be held centrally for student welfare purposes. It was agreed that a requirement to record this information centrally was beyond the scope of the policy.

A number of other minor amendments to the policy were agreed as follows:

- the last line in the first paragraph would be amended to include the word 'eligible' prior to 'students'
- 'in accordance with legislation' or similar wording would be added to section 6.5
- the wording 'regular review meetings between the student, their academic supervisor and their internship supervisor(s) should take place during the internship' will be amended to allow for instances, e.g. in shorter internships, where regular meetings may not be possible

USC endorsed the policy and recommended it to Council, subject to the agreed amendments being made.

Decision

USC/18-19/066 Subject to minor agreed amendments, USC recommended the Internships and Placements Policy to Council.

USC/18-19/067 Any other business

There was no other business.

USC/18-19/068 Items for Noting

The minutes of the Marino Institute of Education Associated College Degrees Committee (MIE ACDC) meeting of 14 February 2019 had been circulated. Members' attention was drawn to the minute regarding the International Foundation Programme (IFP) and the

appendix to the minutes that provided a list of schools into which students had progressed from the programme.