



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 3 April 2019 at 2.15pm in the Boardroom.

Present: Professor Kevin Mitchell, 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 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 Elizabeth Nixon, School of Psychology
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 Philip Curry, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Stephen Matterson, Director of TSM
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science
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
Ms Misha Fitzgibbon, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Vladimir Dotsenko, School of Mathematics
Professor Paula Colavita, School of Chemistry
Professor Peter Crooks, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Linda Hogan, School of Religion
Ms Aimee Connolly, Education Officer, Students' Union

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan, Academic Affairs Office, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Professor Ruth Barton, Head of Department of Film Studies, for item USC/18-19/070i

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies opened the meeting and noted apologies from members. He advised that minutes of the USC meeting on 26 March 2019 would be considered at the meeting on 16 April 2019.

USC/18-19/069 Chair's Report: TEP update

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Schools for their work on the curriculum mapping exercise. The mapping exercise identified the pathways, open modules and subjects offered as a minor for each programme in the curriculum architecture.

Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning, had considered and collated all the returned data to provide an overall picture of the offerings and capacity across College. The returned data highlighted significant increase in capacity is required.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer reminded the meeting that when students progress to the second year of the common architecture, alongside their core subject, they can take credit in the form of Trinity electives, open modules, and/or a minor in a new subject. Open modules are new or existing modules outside of, but complementary to, a student's core discipline. Each programme had been asked both to open up modules to other programmes and to look at the range of open modules on offer and approve those that are suitable for its students.

Students in their second year may take 10-15 ECTS credits of open modules. In order to conservatively estimate the capacity for open modules, data had been modelled on the highest possible demand of all eligible students taking 15 credits of open modules, and none taking a new subject. This modelling showed that supply is drastically insufficient to meet potential demand.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer outlined the pedagogical benefits of open modules whereby a student could build up knowledge in an area of interest to them and of benefit to their main discipline. He noted however, that these benefits can only come about if there is sufficient supply to allow students to take the open module of their choice. Insufficient capacity to meet student demand would mean we were taking away credit from students' core discipline, without giving back in the form of credit from complementary subjects.

The easiest way to avoid this risk is to have a vast excess of supply versus demand. The mapping exercise showed that current supply to demand ratio is approximately 1:1 which is insufficient as student demand will concentrate in some areas over others. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer demonstrated the high demand versus the low supply in some areas that amounted to a ratio of over 1000:20. He noted that as many disciplines were offering 40 credits of core level 2 modules, the potential 20 credits that could have been opened to other programmes were therefore not available.

Some courses had approved many modules in support of the theory that all learning could complement students' main discipline, whereas others had approved only those modules that were very aligned in subject matter. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer explained that when students leave their core discipline to study an open module, this frees up space in that discipline for other students. In response to this, members observed that the modules students would leave were likely to be different to those where students would be gained.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies emphasised the urgency of remedying the supply issue at this stage. He noted that the majority of open modules are level 1 which puts pressure on year 1 quotas. He highlighted some possible solutions as follows:

- programmes to open more modules;
- increase capacity in open modules;
- add more level 2 modules, including those modules that had dropped off due to the requirement to teach 40 ECTS credits
- introduce bespoke open modules
- offer popular modules twice

A number of members referred to the lengthy curriculum review that their Schools had undergone and the measures they had already taken to accommodate the common architecture, noting that their Schools would likely not consider opening further modules or increasing capacity at this stage. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer acknowledged the resource implications of some of the suggestions. He advised that a communication would shortly be sent to Heads of School and DUTLs outlining the proposed solutions. Members suggested that rather than looking at the supply side, College should focus on considering how the demand side could be adjusted and the possibility of reconsidering the former 30:30 option was suggested.

In response to a comment that bespoke modules would blur the lines between open modules and Trinity Electives, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer noted that it would vary across programmes and that every programme would have the right to open a module and other programmes could approve it or not, as appropriate. He noted that the Trinity Electives have certain elements, including an inter-disciplinary aspect, which sets them apart from other modules.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer spoke to the option of students taking up a minor as a new subject in their second year. 23 subjects had indicated they could be offered as a minor. Typically this would involve 20 credits of second year being taken in a first year subject, and this would continue each year with the minor subject being one level down from students' main programme.

Students who enter single honors, joint honors, or common entry programmes have the option to take up a minor as a new subject. Further information will be sought to determine the capacity of these minors; however, it is possible that this is currently insufficient. An option to ensure sufficient capacity is to prioritise minors as a new subject for students on single honor programmes in the first instance, followed by joint honors, and finally common entry. As these are junior freshman modules that students will take up in the first instance, it will pose a capacity challenge as students are not leaving these modules. However some students will drop a second subject when moving into second year which will provide some further capacity.

Members were asked to consider ways to ensure sufficient capacity in open modules and minors. A member suggested starting off with very low quotas and monitoring the capacity and demand situation for a year or two. In response to a query on how students would be assigned to open modules, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thought that where capacity is sufficient it should be an open process, however, where capacity is limited, it would have to be managed in some way, possibly by using first year results. He noted however that this would be a complicated process as students may be simultaneously deciding between open modules, Trinity Electives and a minor as a new subject. A member noted that certain courses have specific entry requirements that cannot be overlooked when admitting students.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer emphasised that the options or diets need to be entered in SITS by May. He hoped that through the communication to Schools and further discussion with DUTLs that the issues presented would be solved as a matter of urgency.

Action

USC/18-19/060 An email proposing possible solutions to the issues of capacity in open modules and minors would be circulated to Heads of School and DUTLs.

i) Course proposal in Film

A proposal for a single honors programme in Film from the School of Creative Arts had been circulated. Professor Ruth Barton, Head of Department of Film Studies, was welcomed to the meeting for this item.

Professor Barton provided a rationale for the programme, noting the high student demand for the subject of film available within TSM, and highlighting the recent quality review that had recommended the School proceed with a single honors programme in Film. The programme is similar to the existing programme available within TSM but provides more practical filmmaking. The course would align Film with Drama and Music in the School as these both offer single honors courses. Developments with the Columbia dual degrees and the introduction of TEP have now provided a good opportunity to offer the programme. The dual degree in Film with Columbia will be brought to the next USC meeting for consideration.

Professor Barton noted that most modules could be taught by existing staff - including retaining the teaching assistant - but that two film practitioners would be bought in for the practical elements of filmmaking. In order to encompass the extra workload associated with supervising the capstone project for these students, some of the options on the MPhil would be withdrawn to free up staff time.

In response to a query on the possibility of timetable difficulties preventing the proposed sharing of sophister modules between JS and SS years, Professor Barton advised that there is a sufficient number of ECTS to split modules out for JS and SS, however this is not ideal as class sizes would be too small. The selected modules would cover both JS and SS for one year but the intention is to rotate and bring in some different modules in other years to provide student choice.

The proposer agreed to consider the quota in the offering of Film as a minor. She noted that the minor would involve less practice-based work.

Decision

USC/18-19/070i USC recommended the proposal for external review and subsequently to Council for approval.

ii) Course proposal in Social Policy

A proposal for Social Policy to be offered as a subject within the new joint honors architecture had been circulated. The Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning in the School of Social Work and Social Policy spoke to the proposal. He noted that currently the only way to study Social Policy in Trinity is through the single honors programme in Sociology and Social Policy whereas Sociology is also available through TSM and exists in the new common architecture. The proposal involves the cessation of the existing single honors Sociology and Social Policy programme. The DUTL noted that offering Social Policy within the joint honors architecture will create the possibility for it to be offered in conjunction with other subjects and hence open attractive routes for students. In order to incorporate Social Policy in the new common architecture, it would be necessary to offer an additional 30 ECTS through the creation of four new modules. Sufficient staff are currently in place to cover the proposed teaching. The proposed quota remains at 28 which is the quota for the existing Sociology and Social Policy Programme.

A discussion ensued around the implications of adding Social Policy to the grid of common architecture subjects at this stage. It was noted that quota is assigned at a subject level which means that taking students out of an anticipated combination may have knock-on effects for other subjects. The DUTL advised that the School would like to offer Social Policy as a combination with another subject as a discrete CAO entry for 2020. The specific

combinations had not yet been worked out but would be required very soon to meet CAO deadlines. Consideration would need to be given to which pillar would be best to allow for the most appropriate pairings.

In response to a member's query regarding the appropriateness of the level of independent study required in the first year, the DUTL advised that the course involves structured continuous assessment as there are no exams; he also agreed to follow up with module coordinators for further information. A member commended the proposal for the different modes of assessment it demonstrated.

The DUTL advised that the quota of only one non-EU student reflected the current position where non-EU numbers have traditionally been very low and that efforts were being made to increase this number. He agreed to consider the quota for the minor in Social Policy. In response to a query, he confirmed that a single honors exit route will not be offered in Social Policy due to resource constraints. This led to a discussion on exit routes for programmes within the common architecture and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed to follow up with a member in this regard.

USC endorsed the decoupling of Sociology and Social Policy, subject to the approval of Social Policy as a new subject in the common architecture. USC agreed that consideration could be given to possible subject pairings for Social Policy.

Decision

USC/18-19/070.1 USC endorsed the decoupling of Sociology and Social Policy as a programme, subject to the approval of Social Policy as a new subject within the common architecture, and will recommend same for Council's approval.

Decision

USC/18-19/070.2 The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies will consider a mechanism for possible subject pairings for Social Policy within the common architecture.

USC/18-19/071 Draft Senior Lecturer's Annual Report

A draft of the Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2017/18 had been circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the Senior Lecturer's Annual Report (SLAR) is designed to provide commentary on the Academic Registry Annual Report and provide an insight into the undergraduate lifecycle from admissions to graduation. The AR report for 2017/18 had been considered by USC at its meeting of 26 March 2019. He acknowledged that the timing of the report is not ideal; it should preferably be produced in early Michaelmas term in order to allow for more meaningful commentary.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted a number of areas in the report including: partnership agreements, TEP developments, new policies, course developments and new entry routes, admissions, retention rates, degree awards and student cases. He provided some discourse on the data for degree awards, the student breakdown across counties, the differing retention rates across courses, the decrease in appeals since the introduction of new progression regulations, and the number of Scholarships awarded.

With reference to the data provided on degree award classifications in Table E14, members agreed that a breakdown of awards within the second class band should be provided for all courses where possible. It was noted that currently the second class honors degree classification is subdivided into first division (II.1) and second division (II.2) for BA moderatorship degrees only. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that for next year's SLAR he would seek this breakdown data and also request information on degree awards over a longer time span.

Further items discussed included the mechanism for dealing with plagiarism which would be given proper consideration at a future meeting of USC, and the expectations of non-EU students vis-à-vis the level of service that they receive from Trinity.

USC/18-19/071 It was agreed that consideration would be given at a future meeting of USC to the process for dealing with plagiarism cases.

USC/18-19/072 Absence from examinations without permission and non-satisfactory

- i) A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 1 April 2019.
- ii) A draft Non-satisfactory Policy.

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 1 April 2019, and a draft Non-satisfactory Policy had been circulated. The two items were discussed in combination. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies opened the discussion by noting the different practices across programmes in relation to students who are absent from an exam without permission. The progression regulations recommended to Council in May 2017 enshrined the right of a student to reassessment if they had achieved a fail in a module. This regulation worked alongside the principle that if a student were excluded for not presenting for an exam, they could apply to the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies to lift the exclusion. In almost all cases these exclusions are lifted. The recommendation for automatic reassessment had been proposed partly to remove this formality of students applying for the exclusion to be lifted; however that aspect is not noted in the Council minute. Furthermore, the subsequent regulation in the Calendar does not stipulate whether a student must make an attempt at an exam in order to 'achieve a fail grade'.

This principle of automatic right to reassessment can be seen to conflict with the current Calendar regulation (43 under II ACADEMIC PROGRESS) that outlines that students who are unable to complete all assessment components necessary to complete a module due to illness or other serious issue, must seek permission from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies to present at the reassessment session.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies asked members to consider how College should treat students who do not show up for an exam, for various reasons, without prior permission. He noted that having the exclusion regulation in place can act as a disincentive for students who might otherwise choose to delay taking exams, or to split their efforts between examination sessions. On the other hand, perhaps College should consider allowing students more control over their studies and allow them agency to present for the first time at the reassessment session. He emphasised the importance of students being treated equally across programmes, and of the need to ensure that our principles match our practice.

Members wondered why continuous assessment was not covered under the same regulations as examinations and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted they were closely interlinked. He went through the draft Non-satisfactory Policy that had been circulated for discussion, noting that we should, where possible, have the same approach to different types of assessment. However there are some experiential events that a student can be returned as non-satisfactory for, e.g. group work, labs, field trips, etc, and these cannot easily be reassessed. Non-satisfactory also covers students who are not engaging or not attending.

It was noted that in the case of a student being absent from an exam without permission, some Schools returned the student as AB (absent without explanation) which resulted in an exclusion and some as AR (absent but will be reassessed). The system allows for a student to be returned as AB for a module, however, the resulting exclusion will apply to the student,

not just that particular module. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies wondered whether we could decouple the codes used for modules from the codes used for students' status.

Members felt that to remove the option of exclusion as a response to being absent from an exam without permission ran a high risk of students falling prey to the moral hazard of opting not to turn up on the day of an exam or of deferring their efforts to the reassessment session. A member highlighted the imbalance that would be caused in assessment loads if students were allowed to choose between assessment sessions. A member spoke of the unfairness of treating students who need to defer an exam due to being medically unwell and who provide certification in a somewhat similar way to students who just decide not to turn for the exam. He noted that students who do not turn up are currently, and should continue to be, asked for an explanation and are then given the chance to make a retrospective case for the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies to consider. The heavy administrative burden involved in setting exams, based on the assumption that students will turn up, was also noted. It was noted that students who do not show up for exams will often have a serious welfare issue.

In response to a comment, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed that consideration could be given to having a single policy covering absence from exams without permission and non-satisfactory. Members noted that the existing NS mechanism does not work effectively. As exclusions are lifted in the vast majority of cases, a member wondered whether having a less severe penalty might therefore be more appropriate.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies indicated that further discussion would be held around whether Schools should use AB or AR in the Semester 2 exams and Schools would be updated on this shortly. He concluded by summing up the consensus at the meeting that students should be incentivised to engage with all parts of their programme and assessment and that USC did not endorse the idea that students could choose not to turn up to an exam and present directly to the reassessment session. Furthermore, USC endorsed the principle that students who are absent from exams or do not submit coursework for an acceptable reason, should continue to be treated differently to students who do not have an acceptable reason. Further discussion on this matter will take place at the next meeting of USC.

Decision USC/18-19/072

USC endorsed the principle that students who are absent from exams or do not submit coursework for an acceptable reason, should continue to be treated differently to students who do not have an acceptable reason.

USC/18-19/073 Trinity Electives

i) Courts of Examiners

ii) Process for no change of mind 2019/20

Due to a lack of time, these items were deferred to the next meeting of USC.

USC/18-19/074 Any other business

There was no other business.