



**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 16 April 2019 at 2.15pm in the Boardroom.**

Present: Professor Kevin Mitchell, Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer (*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 Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Elizabeth Nixon, School of Psychology  
Professor Nicholas Johnson, School of Creative Arts  
Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
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 Peter Crooks, School of Histories and Humanities  
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine  
Professor Linda Hogan, School of Religion  
Professor Stephen Minton, School of Education  
Professor Vladimir Dotsenko, School of Mathematics  
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences  
Professor Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Ms Misha Fitzgibbon, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Kristian Myrseth, School of Business  
Professor Alan O'Connor, School of Engineering  
Professor Alice Jorgensen, School of English  
Professor Frank Wellmer, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Paul Eastham, School of Physics  
Professor Valerie Smith, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Ailbhe O'Neill, School of Law  
Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor Paula Colavita, School of Chemistry  
Professor Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies  
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; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Mr Shane De Rís, President, Students' Union; Professor Ruth Barton, Head of Department of Film Studies, for item USC/18-19/077i; Professor Breffni O'Rourke, Centre for Language and Communication Studies, for item USC/18-19/077ii; Professor Eoin Mac Cárthaigh, Department of Irish and Celtic Languages, for item USC/18-19/077iii; Ms Sue Power, Admissions Officer, for items USC/18-19/080 – USC/18-19/082

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer opened the meeting and noted apologies from members. He welcomed Mr Shane De Rís, President, Students' Union, as an attendee to the meeting.

**USC/18-19/075 Minutes of the meeting of 26 March 2019**

The minutes were approved subject to an amendment in the second last paragraph of item USC/18-19/063 regarding the LENS report. This should read as follows:

“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.

#### **USC/18-19/076 Matters arising**

The following items were approved at the Council meeting on 10 April 2019:

**USC/18-19/044** A continuation of the Trinity Admissions Feasibility Study for a further two-year period, during which time a number of different admissions mechanisms will be explored both in Trinity and through the IUA’s Task Group on the Reform of University Selection and Entry (TGRUSE).

**USC/18-19/060** The definition and criteria of the Capstone Project.

**USC/18-19/062a** The Dual B.A. programme with Columbia University in History of Art and Architecture *and*

**USC/18-19/062b** Request for derogations, History of Art and Architecture.

**USC/18-19/064** The change in the language admission requirement for Middle Eastern and European Languages and Cultures (MEELC).

**USC/18-19/071** The Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2017/18.

#### **USC/18-19/077 Course developments**

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##### **i) Proposal for a dual B.A. programme with Columbia University in Film**

A proposal from the School of Creative Arts had been circulated. Professor Ruth Barton, Head of Department of Film Studies, was welcomed to the meeting to speak to this item.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer introduced the proposal noting that it followed the usual structure of the Columbia dual degrees with students attending Trinity for two years followed by Columbia for two years and a requirement for an additional 60 ECTS credits over the third and fourth year in order to graduate with a degree from each University. Professor Barton noted that there were a small number of issues outstanding, including the Columbia requirement for students to study Science in the second year. She advised that the Capstone will be primarily supervised by Columbia with an add-on module that will be supervised by Trinity.

With respect to staffing resources she noted that a staff member was keen to supervise the Capstone add-on and that otherwise the impact of the seven extra students was minimal and had been accounted for within the previous proposal for a single honors Film course.

A long discussion took place around the requirement for the 10 ECTS in Science within the Columbia Dual B.A.s. It was noted that while the Science Trinity Electives (TEs) would satisfy this requirement, there is currently no mechanism in place to guarantee places on the electives to students on the Columbia programmes. The requirement for 10 ECTS credits in languages would be met by bespoke modules from the language departments offered to all students on Columbia programmes in the JF year.

It was noted that there was space in Junior Freshman Science modules for Columbia students but whether this would work from a timetabling perspective had not been explored. It was noted that the hierarchy for allocation of modules had already been created and that a request to prioritise Science TEs for Columbia students had not been received. If such a request were received, it would have to be considered by a number of TEP groups prior to possible approval.

A member noted that a formal request had not been submitted as earlier discussions had emphasised that guaranteeing modules for a particular group of students would go against

the principles of the electives. Guaranteeing TEs for Columbia students would reduce the electives available to other student cohorts. Members agreed that as Trinity had entered into a number of dual programmes with Columbia with the Science requirement in place, USC and Council should ensure that the issue is resolved at this level for current and future dual degrees. The ADUSE noted she was happy to explore options around the JF Science modules being used to fulfil the 10 ECTS requirements. With the proviso that the issues around the Science requirement would be resolved holistically, USC recommended the proposal to Council.

### **Decision**

**USC/18-19/077i** Taking into account that the issues around fulfilling the Science requirement of the programme would be resolved at a College level, USC recommended the proposal for a Dual B.A. with Columbia in Film for Council approval.

### **ii) Proposal for Linguistics Joint Honors subject**

A proposal from the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences had been circulated. Professor Breffni O'Rourke, Centre for Language and Communication Studies, attended the meeting for this item.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer advised that discussions about new subjects in the joint honors structure were ongoing and requested that at this meeting, USC solely consider the academic merits of linguistics as a subject. It would be necessary to make a decision on possible subject pairings as a matter of urgency as this information was required by the CAO before the end of May 2019 for entry in 2020/21. He noted that when a course comes into the joint honors grid, it has implications for the quotas of all subjects already in the grid. In time, decisions around new subjects in the structure will likely be made by the new Joint Honors committee and office. A number of subjects currently lie outside the grid but would shortly be brought into it.

Professor O'Rourke noted that the Centre for Language and Communications Studies has up to now focused on taught Masters courses and in-service teaching for undergraduate programmes, whilst also offering a Broad Curriculum module, and teaching to TSM students. In addition, linguistics is part of the Computer Science and a Language programme (which was formerly called Computer Science, Linguistics and a Language). TEP has provided the Centre with an opportunity to streamline its undergraduate offering and offer linguistics as a subject within joint honors.

The proposed exit routes are joint honors and major with minor and consideration will be given to offering the subject as a minor. Professor O'Rourke briefly ran through the modules noting the general nature of the freshman years and the more specialist nature of the sophister years. He noted that linguistics could combine with a wide range of subjects, including languages, sociology, philosophy, computer science, etc

In response to a query, Professor O'Rourke noted that of a total of 30 modules, 14 are new. He noted that using teaching assistants for certain elements like labs and tutorials would help to fulfil the requirements of the programme as well as providing experience to the TAs. Most of the new modules occur in the sophister years and it is intended that at that stage in the programme, recruitment will follow from the growth in student numbers.

USC approved linguistics as a subject within the joint honors structure.

### **Decision**

**USC/18-19/077ii** USC approved the proposal for linguistics as a subject within the joint

honors structure while recognising that work was needed to decide on the appropriate pillar, subject pairings and quota.

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**iii) Proposal for Modern Irish as a language option in European Studies**

This item was discussed immediately after item A8. A proposal for the addition of Modern Irish as a subject in European Studies had been received from the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies. Professor Eoin Mac Cárthaigh, Department of Irish and Celtic Languages, joined the meeting for this item. He explained the rationale of the proposal to include Modern Irish as a language option within the European Studies programme was to emphasise the embeddedness of Irish in modern European politics, society and culture, and to increase the visibility of the language in a European context. The timing is optimal as Irish is becoming a full official language in Europe whereas it has previously been an official language with derogations.

Professor Mac Cárthaigh noted that the European Studies programme involves a year abroad in a European country relevant to the language option that students have chosen for their major subject. This would not be possible for the Irish language option and it will therefore be offered as a minor language option on the programme. Most of the Irish language modules are already on offer.

USC approved the proposal for Modern Irish to be offered as a minor language option in European Studies.

**Decision**

**USC/18-19/077iii**

USC approved the proposal for Modern Irish to be offered as a minor language option in European Studies.

**iv) Cessation of B.A. in Sociology and Social Policy**

This item was taken immediately after item A3ii. A signed cessation form for the discontinuation of the direct entry B.A. in Sociology and Social Policy had been circulated. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer introduced the item by highlighting that the programme cessation was tied up with the issue of how Social Policy would come into the joint honors grid; whether it would only be offered as a pairing with Sociology or whether it would be paired with a wider number of subjects.

The Director of Teaching and Learning in Social Policy requested that the cessation be approved subject to Council approval for Social Policy as a subject within joint honors. He noted that the introduction of TEP highlighted that the current course is two distinct subjects offered by two separate Schools and that as Sociology is available within the joint honors structure, it would be more appropriate to offer Social Policy within that structure rather than continue with the current degree.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer noted the impact on quotas in Social Policy and other subjects within the grid if Social Policy were to be offered within that structure, and especially if it were to be just paired with Sociology. The time pressure around the CAO deadline was noted and it was agreed that if these issues could not be resolved on time, the current programme would continue for an extra year. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer acknowledged that it was more attractive to offer Social Policy within the joint honors structure, rather than through the current Sociology and Social Policy programme.

USC recommended the cessation of the B.A. in Sociology and Social Policy, subject to the Council approval of Social Policy as a joint honors subject.

**Decision****USC/18-19/077iv**

USC recommended the cessation of the B.A. in Sociology and Social Policy, subject to the Council approval of Social Policy as a joint honors subject.

**USC/18-19/078 Absence from examinations without permission and non-satisfactory**

Due to a lack of time, this item was deferred to the next meeting of USC.

**USC/18-19/079 Trinity Electives****XX****i) Courts of Examiners**

The Associate Dean of Science Education (ADUSE) spoke to this item and advised that the proposed process for the Court of Examiners had been considered by the Trinity Electives subgroup and approved by TEP Features and TEP Steering. The subgroup had considered the Council-approved role of Courts of Examiners and quality control of Trinity Electives. The proposed procedure was for 2019/20 with further consideration required once TEP structures will have ceased.

The proposed procedure recommended the following steps:

- 1) Module marks should be scrutinised and moderated where appropriate at a local level by a marks review panel consisting of a minimum of three academics that contributed to the TE or that belong to the School, including the module coordinator.
- 2) A Trinity Electives Review Committee consisting of academic representatives currently in the TE Subgroup and chaired by the ADUSE will meet to review all TE results. The committee will prepare a report based on anonymised marks from all TEs that shows the number of students taking each module, the number achieving each grade, and the mean, median, and variation of marks in each module.
- 3) Progression and awards will be handled at programme level by the relevant Court of Examiners. The results data from the TE Review Committee will be provided to the Courts of Examiners in each programme. Contact information of module coordinators will be available to the Chairs of the Courts of Examiners but a dedicated representative of the TEs will not sit on each court.

A discussion took place around the input of external examiners in the marking of TEs. It became apparent that there were disparate practices around College in relation to external examiners involvement in the examinations process and it was therefore not considered appropriate to revise the proposal to encompass external examiners.

USC approved the proposal for a 1-year period, noting that it will be monitored and reviewed after this time.

**Decision****USC/18-19/079i**

USC approved the proposed Trinity Electives Courts of Examiners process for a 1-year period.

**XX****ii) Process for no change of mind 2019/20**

A memorandum from the Associate Dean of UG Science Education, Chair of Workstream #3 TEP Features, dated 28 March 2019, had been circulated. The ADUSE introduced this item noting that in 2019/20 there will be no change of mind process for Trinity Electives due to the risk of adding additional uncertainty in the first roll out of the allocation process. This will be reviewed for 2020/21 but in the meantime, draft steps were compiled to deal with students who encounter genuine difficulties with a TE in 2019/20.

The steps were approved by TEP Steering Committee and can be summarised as follows: students contact their Module Coordinator who, if they cannot resolve the issue, contacts the Chair of the TE Subgroup. The TE Subgroup will attempt to find a solution and where this is not possible it refers the issue to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer as a student case.

A clear statement outlining that change of mind will not be facilitated in 2019/20 will be published on the TE website and on my.tcd.ie. Module Coordinators, the Senior Tutor and School Managers in Schools that host TEs, will be notified of the proposed procedure for 2019/20.

A member noted that depending on the timing of a student case being made, it might be too late in the year to accommodate a request to transfer to another TE.

USC approved the proposed process for 2019/20.

### **Decision**

#### **USC/18-19/079ii**

USC approved the process for requests to transfer to a different Trinity Elective for 2019/20.

#### **USC/18-19/080 Northern Ireland Feasibility Study**

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A memorandum from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, dated 11 April 2019, together with NI admissions data and Northern Ireland Report 2017/18 had been circulated. The Admissions Officer was welcomed to the meeting to consider the next three items.

At its meeting in June 2018, Council had approved a proposal for the extension of the Northern Ireland Feasibility Study (NIFS) for 2019/20 entrants (CL/17-18/220). The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies introduced the item noting that previously the points conversion from A-level was thought to disadvantage A-level students who had taken only three A-levels and this led to Trinity losing good quality applicants. The Northern Ireland Feasibility Study was established in part to overcome this possible disadvantage. Students would apply through the CAO indicating that they wished to apply to the Study. The Study involved a concession on points but held the minimum requirement of ABB. Subsequent to the introduction of the Study, the points conversion mechanism had been revised and a further revision will come into place in 2019/20 whereby the first three A-levels will be weighted higher than the fourth so that students taking four A-levels are not hugely advantaged over those doing three. The revisions to the Leaving Certificate points system will also improve the situation for A-level students.

Looking at the figures for applications and admissions, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer noted that a significant number of NI students entered College through the Study which would suggest that the revision to points conversions have not fully solved the issues. Applications had decreased for 2019/20 from 2018/19 which may be due to the impact of Brexit. There was also a significant problem in converting offers to acceptances which was thought to be due to accommodation issues and the high cost of living.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer recommended that in the context of Brexit and the current political climate, Trinity should retain the Study as a way to demonstrate its commitment to students from NI. The Admissions Officer noted that in 2018/19 many NI students either gained entry with the points they received or they accepted offers from other universities. She acknowledged the heavy workload that had gone into the Study in the last five years and noted that the expected return had not materialised. She felt

that in many cases Trinity was being used as a backup in case these students did not receive offers elsewhere. It was noted that the issue with Brexit meant that we did not have reliable data on the effectiveness of the Study.

In addition to the low conversion of acceptances to offers, there was an issue with converting acceptances to enrolments due to late offers from UCAS. It was noted, however, that the conversion of offers to acceptances was significantly higher through the Study than through the standard route for NI students but this was likely because these students were receiving an offer through the Study on the basis of lower points than those required for their preferred course. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer wondered whether we could compile data on how students who entered via the Study were progressing in College. USC acknowledged the importance of the Study in demonstrating its commitments to NI students and recommended the continuation of the Study for a further year.

#### **Decision**

**USC/18-19/080** USC recommended the continuation of the Study for a further year.

#### **USC/18-19/081 Singapore entry route**

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A memorandum from the Head of Operations, Academic Registry, dated 8 April 2019, had been circulated. The Admissions Officer spoke to the proposal to formalise our admission requirement for applicants presenting a Singaporean Polytechnic Diploma. She advised that currently students who have completed a Singaporean Polytechnic Diploma may apply for advanced entry to Trinity, but there is no formal recognition of the diploma for direct entry, therefore students with the diploma may be considered for admission into year 2 but have no route to join the university from year 1.

The proposal recommended that a Singapore Polytechnic Diploma requirement of 3.0 GPA is set for direct admission to undergraduate programmes outside of those covered by the School of Medicine/Singapore Institute of Technology partnership as these have their own specific requirements. Matriculation and course-specific requirements would also apply.

#### **Decision**

##### **USC/18-19/081**

USC approved the proposal to allow applicants who hold a Singapore Polytechnic Diploma and have a 3.0 GPA to be considered for direct entry to year 1 programmes, outside of those programmes covered by the School of Medicine/Singapore Institute of Technology partnership.

#### **USC/18-19/082 Internal Transfer dates**

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A memorandum from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, dated 28 February 2019, had been previously circulated. The Admissions Officer advised that the State Examinations Commission had reviewed the timelines for the publication of results of the Leaving Certificate appeals. In previous years, the re-check results were published in the first week in October. In 2019, these results will be released during the week of 16 September.

Under the MOU with the CAO, internal transfers cannot be processed until the CAO season has closed. The revision of the Leaving Certificate appeals process would allow for a change to the internal transfer application deadline. It was proposed that the deadline for the submission of transfer applications would move from the end of Week 4 of Teaching Term to the end of Week 2 of Teaching Term. This would bring in the date for the issuing of decisions to students from the current Week 7 of Teaching Term to the end of Week 4 of Teaching Term.

Looking at the data that had been requested at the previous meeting on the number of internal transfers, it was noted that the most common reason for transfers was a student making the decision to pursue another programme of study.

A discussion of this item had previously taken place at the USC meeting of 26 March 2019 and had resulted in two main schools of thought emerging. The same comments were made at this meeting and can be summarised as follows: 1) the earlier deadline would benefit students' learning by allowing them to start their course earlier and 2) the earlier deadline is too close to the start of term to allow for sufficient time to engage in a programme in order to make a considered decision around transferring to another programme. Some members felt that in light of the introduction of Christmas examinations, it would be unfair to students to maintain the current deadlines. The student representatives at the meeting were of the opinion that two weeks was insufficient time for a student to fully consider their course and that an application deadline of Week 2 of Teaching Week could encourage students to either remain in a course they are unhappy with, or to drop out.

The Admissions Officer advised that the most common reason for internal transfers was that the course was not what a student had envisaged. She noted that Schools/Departments often resisted accepting transfer students with the current deadline as they felt that too much of the course had already been missed.

The option of moving the application deadline to the end of Week 3 of Teaching Term with students being informed of decisions in Week 5 of Teaching Term was proposed at the meeting. There was no significant preference for Week 3 versus Week 2 but a small proportion of members favoured the Week 3 deadline and this was approved by USC. It was agreed that the situation would be monitored at the end of the process in 2019/20.

**Decision:**

**USC/18-19/082**

USC recommended adopting an internal transfer application deadline for Junior Freshman students of the end of Week 3 of Teaching Term.

**USC/18-19/083 Education Strand of Strategic Plan 2019-24**

This item was discussed immediately after item A3. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer advised that the Vice-Provost chairs a number of groups to put in place College's next Strategic Plan which will run from 2019-2024. The Plan comprises four strands: civic action, organisation, research, and education. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer chairs the education strand which looks at Trinity's educational goals over the next five years. He invited members to consider what these goals should be and provide feedback at the next meeting of USC or via email to [senior.lecturer@tcd.ie](mailto:senior.lecturer@tcd.ie). He advised that the goals should be cross-cutting with links between strands.

He provided the meeting with an overview of some of the high-level concepts that were currently being discussed: consolidating the Trinity Education Project with the culture and systems in Trinity; considering the postgraduate sphere in a more coherent way, including lifelong learning for students and staff; inter-disciplinarity; diversifying the student and staff bodies; and ensuring reliable and rigorous research practices are embedded into our programmes. He pointed out that a large number of strategic plans were in place throughout College, including E3, GRS 3, mainstreaming of TEP, and plans within individual Schools.

A discussion took place around the future size of the College where it was noted that calculations showed the student body would grow to 22,000 by the year 2024. A number of members cautioned that College should carefully consider activities and resources within the context of this growth. A member commented that resource issues currently impacted the



student experience and reported that students in his School sometimes had poor experiences with support staff in College. He felt that the graduate attributes should be demonstrated to students by example. Another member noted the impact that the E3 strategy would have on the composition of the university and the implications this would have on resources and student services.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies urged members to submit ideas and comments by email.

**USC/18-19/084 Any other business**

A member highlighted the concern of students in his School about the pressurised timeframe around examinations. He noted that in addition to College exams, exams from outside bodies can often fall near the end of term. He wondered whether the academic year structure could be reviewed to build in more time between the end of term and examinations. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer noted that the academic year structure is set by Council. He emphasised the importance of monitoring how the examinations will have run following the first year of the new academic year structure. He also noted that the amount and timing of assessment was being reviewed and assistance on this was being provided to Schools.

**USC/18-19/085 Items for noting**

USC noted and approved the following items:

- i. Name change request for Film Studies,**  
memorandum from Head of School, Creative Arts, 1 April 2019
  
- ii. Introduction of Ab initio German to European Studies and Middle Eastern and European Languages and Cultures programmes,**  
memorandum from DUTL, SLLCS, dated 3 April 2019