



**A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 18 February 2020 at 2.15 pm in the Trinity Board Room, Trinity Business School Building.**

Present: Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)  
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary  
Professor Kevin O'Kelly, Dean of Students  
Professor Stephen Matterson, Director of TSM/Trinity Joint Honors  
Professor Áine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education  
Professor Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School  
Professor Nicholas Johnson, School of Creative Arts  
Professor Andrew Loxley, School of Education  
Professor Brendan O'Connell, School of English  
Professor Peter Crooks, School of Histories and Humanities  
Professor Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies  
Professor Ailbhe O'Neill, School of Law  
Professor Breffni O'Rourke, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences  
Professor Elizabeth Nixon, School of Psychology  
Professor Michael Wycherley, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
Professor Stan Houston, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
Professor Linda Hogan, School of Religion  
Professor Aisling Dunne, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Nicola Marchetti, School of Engineering  
Professor Paschalis Karageorgis, School of Mathematics  
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Paul Eastham, School of Physics  
Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine  
Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent  
Ms Zoe Cummins, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor  
Professor Eoin Scanlan, School of Chemistry  
Professor Frank Wellmer, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Valerie Smith, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Ms Niamh McCay, Education Officer, Students' Union

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Head of Academic Practice; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Manager of Academic Services Division, Mr Michael Slevin (for item USC/19-20/038(i))

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**USC/19-20/036 Minutes of the meeting of 21 January 2020**

The minutes of the meeting of 21 January 2020 were approved.

**USC/19-20/037 Matters arising**

**USC/19-20/031(i)** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that Council approved the memorandum 'Re-assessed, Deferring, Off-Books, Course Transfer and Visiting Students, and Facilitating Pathway and

- Module Selection’.
- USC/19-20/031(ii)** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that Council approved the memorandum ‘Proposal for Mainstreaming of Trinity Electives: Academic and Operational.’
- USC/19-20/032** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that Council discussed the USC minute on the proposed changes to the structure and timing of the Scholarship Examination. He noted that whilst he outlined the concerns of USC members, Council broadly supported the proposed changes. He added that an analysis of results achieved in the first and second years, shows that first class results were achieved in quite a high number of modules, meaning that a calibration mechanism may have to be considered. In response to a query, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged that the time available to approve a final proposal for the next academic year was extremely tight but that this would be attempted nonetheless. He advised that the current rules may have to be retained for a further year and would, therefore, require an interim solution for second year students in 2020/21.

**USC/19-20/038 Trinity Education Project**

**XX i. Revised Timetabling Policy and Procedure**

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed the Manager of the Academic Services Division, Mr Michael Slevin, for the item. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the Timetabling Policy was initially approved in the 2018/19 academic year. He highlighted the main amendments, which concerned the formal establishment of a Central Timetabling Unit (CTU), within the Academic Services Division, to further embed the fixed timetable which enables key features of the common architecture. He noted that the location of the CTU is likely to change in the future, possibly to the Academic Registry, following the full implementation of the fixed timetable.

During the discussion of the revised policy the following comments and queries were raised:

- Outside of the normal teaching terms and teaching hours, the Commercial Revenue Unit (CRU) should give priority to research related events over other sorts of room bookings.
- Flexibility to facilitate individual lecturer constraints should be articulated in the policy.
- The prioritisation of space for Trinity Electives was questioned, particularly in relation to space predominantly used by programmes in the Health Sciences.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that modules which have the most constraints, like Trinity Electives, must be timetabled first. The Manager of the Academic Services Division added that if the scheduling of a Trinity Elective has a consequent effect on a particular course timetable, in terms of a teaching space, discussions would take place with the relevant school and agreement would be sought to resolve the matter, as is currently the case. Commenting on giving priority to bookings for research activities he confirmed that a sentence could be added to clause 7.4.8 in the policy to indicate that the CRU will consult with the ‘owning’ discipline in relation to the booking of events into locally managed teaching space, outside of normal teaching hours and teaching terms. He agreed to discuss the wording with the Director of Student Services and the CRU.

In relation to facilitating requests from individual lecturers related to personal constraints, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that this

would likely cause the timetable to become gridlocked. Any such requests, if they could be accommodated, would have to be managed within the relevant timetable block for the course year. He added that he would talk, in broad terms, to the Associate Vice-Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion about this matter.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Manager of the Academic Services Division, who then withdrew from the meeting.

**Decision USC/19-20/38(i):** USC recommended the Revised Timetabling Policy to Council subject to the inclusion of wording related to the CRU consulting the relevant school on the booking of locally managed teaching space, outside normal teaching hours and outside teaching terms. USC also noted the updated Timetabling Procedures document.

ii. **Proposal for Trinity Elective**

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A memorandum from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE) and Professor Declan O’Sullivan, dated 14 February 2020, was circulated.

Speaking to the proposal, the ADUSE noted that, if approved, this module would bring the total number of Trinity Electives to 39 and would be the first Trinity Elective to be delivered from outside Trinity, in this case by the National College of Art and Design (NCAD). She advised that the module, ‘Contemporary Art Angles’, was previously evaluated by the Trinity Electives Subgroup, which recommended specific amendments to ensure alignment with Trinity Electives criteria. On this point, she thanked the Directors of (UG) Teaching and Learning in the Schools of Creative Arts, and Histories and Humanities, who assisted NCAD with the modifications. She noted that the Trinity Electives Subgroup is now satisfied that the module meets the aims and criteria for Trinity Electives and has recommended it to USC.

She added that the proposal represents the start of a broader collaboration with NCAD, whereby it is envisaged that students from that institution would also be able to enrol on Trinity modules, in exchange. An inter-institutional collaborative agreement is being drawn up that will provide a framework for the future relationship and for operational matters. In the interim, 25 Trinity students would be able to take the proposed module and the School of Histories and Humanities has undertaken to provide the necessary administrative support and coordination across the two institutions.

In response to a question, the ADUSE confirmed that Trinity students would take this module along with NCAD students and that lectures would take place on the Trinity campus. She confirmed that some of the outlined gallery visits would take place during lecture hours but that students would also be expected to visit exhibitions in their own time.

The Head of Academic Practice highlighted that the module learning outcomes were not as clear as they could be and that the first one listed simply read as a description of the assessment requirements. It was noted that when the details are uploaded to the module manager in SITS, only the first four learning outcomes should be included and that the first learning outcome should be re-written.

**Decision USC/19-20/38(ii):** USC approved the module ‘Contemporary Art Angles’ to be delivered by NCAD as a Trinity Elective, subject to the re-writing of the first module learning outcome.

**USC/19-20/039 Assessment: Non-submission and non-attendance procedure**

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 12 February 2020, was circulated along with a procedure concerning students who are absent

from examinations, without permission, and those who do not submit other assessment components. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that such students are treated in different ways across the University; some receive an end of year result of 'Exclude', which is draconian and is overturned on appeal in the majority of cases, whilst others are simply allowed to undergo reassessment in August, without penalty. He commented that the procedure circulated is an attempt to address the inconsistent treatment of such students and to put forward a proportionate penalty for those who do not engage. He confirmed that the procedure is in line with principles endorsed by USC previously.

He referred the meeting to the three main options open to a court of examiners, under the procedure, where a student has missed assessment components.

- Deferral – to apply in cases where the student has submitted an acceptable explanation with the required evidence within an acceptable timeframe.
- Fail, reassess with component marks capped – to apply where the student has not completed assessment components in modules totalling up to 20 ECTS, without an acceptable explanation and evidence.
- Fail, repeat year – to apply where a student has not completed assessments in modules totalling over 20 ECTS, without an acceptable explanation and evidence.

These decisions would generally relate to the students taking Semester 1 and 2 assessments in their first attempt of a year, however, he noted that Table 1 in the document also provided a comprehensive summary of students in different categories, for example, those who are on a repeat year or 'off-books' taking assessments. He added that during the academic year, requests for deferrals would be handled in the normal way, through the Student Cases function; course offices would only process this paperwork between the Semester 2 assessment session and the relevant court of examiners. The court of examiners would need to see the full profile of module results for the year and the recommendation from the course office, based on whether or not an explanation and evidence had been received, before one of these decisions could be reached.

In response to questions he confirmed that:

- the non-submission/non-completion of assessments is being disentangled from non-attendance at lectures and the Non-Satisfactory procedure, which also requires work;
- where there are composite assessment components, module co-ordinators must decide on the level of engagement required and must inform students of this;
- the wording will be amended to indicate that assessment modalities may differ in the reassessment period and that where capping is to apply, it applies to whatever form the reassessment takes;
- it would be too late to apply the new procedure in this academic year.

The discussion turned to the responsibility of evaluating acceptable explanations and evidence related to deferral requests and several members indicated that a number of course offices already process such requests where medical certificates are supplied; the recommendation for deferral is included on the results report for the relevant court of examiners to approve. However, this practice is not uniform across all undergraduate courses as other offices seek the input and oversight of the Student Cases function in such situations. It was requested that the role of courses offices be better defined in the procedure and that documents on such processes be unified and presented in one location. It was also suggested that data protection implications be considered as the procedure potentially expands the pool of people who will see such requests. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted that courts of examiners should not discuss the details of a deferral request, rather, such a request and evidence should be considered by the relevant course office, which would indicate the recommended result for the court of examiners to approve.

He advised that further discussions would need to take place with the Academic Registry to devise and implement related module coding.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies summarised the areas in the document that require further consideration and amendment, these related to:

- (i) clarifying the roles of course offices and the Student Cases function in relation to granting deferrals;
- (ii) the inclusion of wording to recognise different assessment modalities in the reassessment session;
- (iii) the question as to whether capped marks should be flagged on the student transcript.

**Decision USC/19-20/39:** USC noted that a revised procedure would return to USC for consideration before it is circulated to Council for final approval.

**USC/19-20/040 Any other business**

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the next meeting of USC would take place on the earlier date of 23 March 2020 rather than on 24 March. He confirmed that it would take place at the same time, 2.15 pm, and in the same venue, the Trinity Boardroom.

**USC/19-20/041 Items for noting**

- XX** USC noted and approved minor amendments to the revised Plagiarism Policy, dated February 2020, related to data protection and GDPR insertions.