



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 26 March 2020 at 2.00 pm online.

Present: Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Professor Kevin O'Kelly, Dean of Students
Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor
Professor Stephen Matterson, Director of TSM/Trinity Joint Honors
Professor Áine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education
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 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 Aisling Dunne, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Nicola Marchetti, School of Engineering
Professor Frank Wellmer, School of Genetics and Microbiology
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 Valerie Smith, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent
Ms Niamh McCay, Education Officer, Students' Union
Ms Zoe Cummins, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School
Professor Ailbhe O'Neill, School of Law
Professor Linda Hogan, School of Religion
Professor Eoin Scanlan, School of Chemistry

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; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Jennifer Pepper (for item USC/19-20/044); Professor Laurence Gill and Professor Jenny McElwain (for item USC/19-20/046).

USC/19-20/042 Minutes of the meeting of 18 February 2020

The minutes of the meeting of 18 February 2020 were approved.

USC/19-20/043 Matters arising

USC/19-20/038(i)

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that Council approved the revised Timetabling Policy and noted the updated procedures.

- USC/19-20/038(ii)** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that Council approved the new Trinity Elective, to be delivered by the National College of Art and Design.
- USC/19-20/039** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that work is ongoing in relation to finalising the procedure on missed assessments.
- USC/19-20/041** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the revised Plagiarism Policy was approved by Council.

USC/19-20/044 Academic Continuity Planning

A copy of an e-mail from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, dated 17 March 2020, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Ms Jennifer Pepper, Head of Operations in the Academic Registry, to the meeting. He informed the meeting that he and other members of the Assessment Working Group were meeting on a daily basis to plan for the delivery of Semester 2 assessments during the closure of the campus, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that Council, at its last meeting, approved a number of assessment contingency measures, which could be adopted by schools and departments, to ensure that students are given an opportunity to progress at the end of the academic year. He noted that schools had returned information on their Semester 2 assessment plans and that these were being reviewed by the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, himself, along with the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Science Education and the Two Subject Moderatorship/Trinity Joint Honors Director. He confirmed that this information would be reviewed at a high level to check for consistency and to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for certain assessment types, such as real-time online examinations. He indicated that there would be follow-up questions for some schools within the coming days. In addition, consideration is being given to reasonable accommodations for students with a disability, clinical placements, the finalisation of capstone work, students on the dual degree programmes with Columbia University, and those out on Erasmus and other exchanges.

He commented that plans were being put into place to schedule final examinations in Medicine online in the first week in April. Speaking about online examinations, he commented on the need for good broadband connectivity and appropriate invigilation; mechanisms are being explored for invigilation but many options require students to purchase additional hardware. There are also data protection and other legal issues regarding surveillance to work through.

He advised the Committee that the College Board, at its meeting of 25 March, had delegated authority to the Provost, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and to the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, himself, to alter academic and course regulations, if needed, without the need to seek approval from Council to respond to the present difficulties.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that Blackboard, the online teaching and learning platform, has removed certain functions, however, he suggested that a variety of platforms could be used for oral examinations.

During the course of the discussion, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Assessment Working Group were commended in their work. The following points and questions were also raised:

- Some students may experience difficulties accessing Blackboard due to state restrictions, such as those in China.

- The Student Hardship Fund should be made available to struggling students to assist with the purchase of laptops and to help with the cost of phone data; in response the Senior Tutor confirmed that no such requests had been received but that the Fund could be put to this use.
- Time differences must be considered by module coordinators if they are setting real-time or open book examinations for students based outside Ireland.
- Should schools implement solutions for Erasmus students or wait for a coordinated College plan?
- It was requested that external examiners be granted access to Blackboard.
- It was requested that plans for reasonable accommodations be made as consistent as possible.
- Calling meetings with students in relation to suspected plagiarism will be difficult.
- Additional papers for the rescheduling of examinations within the session should be avoided.
- The responsibility for the administration of examinations was queried.
- Where assessment rubrics are changing, students need to be informed as soon as possible.
- Clear advice should be given to students in relation to course elements which have additional eligibility requirements based on end-of-year results, such as the allocation of moderatorship options in Science or study abroad. In response, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Science Education confirmed that there were no plans to alter the moderatorship allocation method in Science and that this would be clearly communicated to students.
- Can assessment information be provided to JF and SF students while Sophister year details are being considered?
- Consideration should be given to granting general deferrals to the reassessment session.
- Students should receive notice of revised publication dates for results as soon as possible so that they can inform prospective employers and/or other universities to which they have applied.
- The assessment period is very early in Trinity therefore there is scope to extend it.
- Consideration should be given to connectivity problems and to students who do not have internet access.
- Some students do not have appropriate quiet space at home to participate in online examinations.
- Students who cannot participate in online examinations due to space problems and/or lack of internet access should be given alternative assessments.
- Deadlines for continuous assessments should be appropriately spaced.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that he was due to meet with the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and the Vice-President for Global Relations to discuss contingency plans for Erasmus students later that day. It was commented by a member that different solutions are likely to be required for students in different exchange situations. Another member stressed that solutions, where possible, should be implemented without delay.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies requested members to refrain from advising JF and SF students of revised assessment plans until the overall review has been completed. Speaking about the duration of the assessment session, he confirmed that there is approval for an additional two weeks, if needed. This would have a knock-on effect on the marking period, which, for a number of academic staff members, would also be affected by domestic responsibilities such as caring for children. He noted that the duration of the assessment session will be confirmed following the review of schools' assessment plans and that members should expect the marking period to be extended too. He confirmed that where examinations are being converted to course work, module coordinators and schools

can manage the related administration. However, if real-time examinations are to be used, the Academic Registry must be involved in scheduling events to avoid clashes. The Head of Operations, Academic Registry, confirmed this approach and added that the categorisation of reasonable accommodations will be looked at as part of the review of information returned by schools.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that, for various concerns cited by members, the use of real-time online examinations should be limited as much as possible. Professor Harbison commented on plans for the final Medicine examinations going online and advised that a protocol is being developed in the School of Medicine along with video resources; he commented that he would be happy to share these and discuss plans with members.

The Head of Academic Practice confirmed that CAPSL had created a number of resources covering suggestions and considerations for assessing students during the campus closure; she advised that an e-mail will circulate shortly with links to these resources and that staff can submit questions.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their comments, which will be fed-back to the Assessment Working Group, and for their forbearance. He advised that schools would be contacted very shortly in relation to their assessment plans.

The Head of Operations, Academic Registry, Ms Jennifer Pepper withdrew from the meeting.

USC/19-20/045 Trinity Education Project

XX i. Integrating non-pillar subjects

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 23 March 2020, was circulated. Speaking to the document, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that work this academic year had concentrated on further implementing and embedding aspects of the Trinity Education Project (TEP). He outlined the linkages between the organisation of subjects into pillars, timetabling and the realisation of the common architecture.

He brought the meeting through the memorandum by first concentrating on the allocation of additional subjects into the four pillars. He explained that two of these subjects were new, Linguistics and Social Policy (subject to Council approval), but that others belong to existing standalone joint honors programmes which had not been allocated to pillars previously. He provided the rationale for the subject distribution and highlighted that under this distribution, Sociology would have to move from Pillar 3 to Pillar 1. He noted that no distribution of subjects across the pillars would enable all existing subject combinations, however, the distribution presented accommodates the largest number of these and will allow for new combinations such as Computer Science and Geography.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies then explained that subjects coming into the pillars would be assigned a single subject quota, rather than ring-fenced quotas for existing combinations, with new entrants being allocated places under the Trinity Joint Honors mechanism. This is proposed in all cases apart from the combinations in Business Studies and a Language and Law and a Language programmes, which would retain their ring-fenced quotas; modelling has indicated that the Modern Languages would lose students if the quotas for these programmes are not protected. In all other cases, with a single subject quota, each subject must have a sufficient number of subject partners to help ensure a balanced distribution of students across combinations.

He added that where a subject partners with a Modern Language, all of the individual language options permitted through the pillar system can be opened up within that combination without creating new CAO codes; he proposed that this be implemented. In response to a question concerning new combinations involving Middle Eastern, Jewish and Islamic Civilisations, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that these would not be implemented at this time as they would increase the number of Trinity's CAO codes. He noted a correction to the quotas for Law and French and Law and German.

The proposals contained within the document were, for the most part, supported by USC, however specific issues were raised.

Professor Wycherley indicated support for the developments, in principle, but highlighted that there had been insufficient consultation with disciplines in the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy in relation to new subject partners. Commenting on the proposed combinations with Social Policy, he noted that there is some possible overlap of modules which would have to be resolved. He voiced a request from the Department of Economics that consideration be given to the combination of Computer Science and Economics in the future. Finally, he expressed concern in relation to the possible diminution of autonomy in decision making related to the new governance structure for the common architecture, which is under development separately.

Professor Crooks dissent was noted in relation to removing the ring-fenced quota for History and Political Science as it moves into the Trinity Joint Honors mechanism. He indicated that consultation, specifically with the Department of History, had not been sufficient and that modelling data had not been seen by the School of Histories and Humanities in relation to the potential effects of moving to single subject quotas.

In response to these concerns the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged that, if starting again, he would have approached consultation differently. He undertook to discuss the particular concerns with the two schools and relevant departments. He noted the time pressure involved in receiving Council approval for the recommendations and indicated that he would attempt to obtain USC support, following these further discussions, via e-mail.

Decision USC/19-20/045(i)(a): The Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) noted and approved the allocation of subjects into the four pillars, as presented, to apply from September 2021.

Decision USC/19-20/045(i)(b): The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies undertook to meet with the Schools of Histories and Humanities and Social Sciences and Philosophy to discuss the issues raised in the meeting.

Decision USC/19-20/045(i)(c): The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, following these discussions, is to circulate a revised document via e-mail to USC members for approval, prior to circulation to Council.

XX ii. Principles for Open Modules

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 9 March 2020, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies briefly outlined the proposed principles.

Decision USC/19-20/045(ii): USC noted and approved the principles for Open Modules, as circulated.

USC/19-20/046 Course proposal: Environment Science and Engineering

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A course proposal from the Schools of Natural Sciences and Engineering, dated 23 March 2020, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Professor Jenny McElwain, from the School of Natural Sciences, and Professor Laurence Gill, from the School of Engineering, to the meeting.

Professor Gill commented that the development of the proposal arose from the University's E3 initiative, noting that the programme has been designed as a flagship course between two of the participating schools. It aims to produce graduates that will be able to tackle environmental problems and promote sustainability. He summarised the structure of the course, which is 5 years in total leading to a Master's qualification. Students have the option to leave after the fourth year with a Bachelor's degree. The first three years of the programme are common years, after which students will split into their preferred stream for years 4 and 5: Environmental Engineering or Applied Environmental Science. While in years 4 and 5, students will have the opportunity to take modules that are shared across both streams. He stated that students cannot enter year 5 from outside the course.

Professor McElwain confirmed that approval had been granted for four new academic staff members, with the recruitment of the first underway. The remaining staff members will be recruited on a phased basis as the programme progresses, which will fit well with the delivery of new modules. Responding to a question from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies in relation to the supervision of projects and internships, whilst ensuring a good quality educational experience for students, Professor McElwain confirmed that most supervisors will undertake the supervision of four to six projects. Methods are being devised to enable group supervision and peer-to-peer learning. Both Professor McElwain and Professor Gill confirmed that there are significant levels of support in both schools to support the programme and to accommodate capstone projects.

Responding to a query from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies in relation to the timetable, Professor Gill noted that there was one clash that can be resolved by moving an Engineering module. He also highlighted that another module, Geochemical Cycles, had been cancelled and confirmed that an appropriate replacement will be provided in the document for Council. It was noted by the meeting that should similar programmes be developed in the future, a more systematic solution would need to be devised for timetabling.

The multidisciplinary nature of the course was commended and it was suggested that this feature could be strengthened further in the fifth year through the organisation of dissertations on common themes, which would enable the continued integration of students, whilst enabling them to approach the research topic from their chosen perspective, depending on their stream.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the first external review report had been received from Keith Beven, Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Hydrology Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University, who had provided positive comments in the main. However, he has made some specific comments which will have to be addressed in the proposal before it is presented to Council.

Decision USC/19-20/046: USC noted and approved the proposal for a new integrated UG/PG programme in Environmental Science and Engineering, subject to certain items highlighted by the external reviewer being addressed in the document prior to circulation to Council. USC noted the intended start date of September 2021.

Professors McElwain and Gill withdrew from the meeting.

USC/19-20/047 Any other business

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A memorandum from Professor Lorna Carson, dated 25 March 2020, concerning proposed temporary revisions to English Language Entry Requirements (UG and PG) during COVID-19, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies outlined the main recommendations.

Decision USC/19-20/047: USC noted and approved the proposed temporary revisions to the English language requirements, as circulated.

USC/19-20/048 Minutes

USC noted and approved the following sets of minutes.

- i Associated College Degrees Committee (RIAM)**
Minutes of the meeting of 16 October 2019.
- ii Associated College Degrees Committee (MIE)**
Minutes of the meeting of 14 November 2019.
- iii Widening Participation Group**
Minutes of the meeting of 25 November 2019.

USC/19-20/049 Items for noting

USC noted and approved the following documents.

- XX i Trinity Open Day dates for 2020, 2021 and 2022**
Memorandum from the Director of Marketing, dated 27 February 2020.
- ii Derogations for 2020/21 and Curriculum Map Changes**
Memorandum from Academic Affairs, dated 19 March 2020.
- XX iii Handbook Policy (Revised)**
Memorandum from Linda Darby, Academic Affairs, dated 23 March 2020.
- XX iv Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (Revised).**
- XX v Academic Awards Policy (Revised).**
- XX vi Course Title Change**
Memorandum from the Schools of Linguistic, Speech, and Communication Sciences, Computer Science and Statistics, and Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies, dated 23 March 2020.