



**A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 13 October 2020 at 2 pm via Zoom.**

Present: Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)  
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary  
Professor Catherine McCabe, Dean of Students  
Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor  
Professor Áine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education  
Professor Graeme Murdock, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture  
Professor Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School  
Professor Jennifer O'Meara, 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 Neville Cox, 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 Jacob Erickson, School of Religion  
Professor Clair Gardiner, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Nicola Marchetti, School of Engineering  
Professor Juan Pablo Labrador, School of Genetics & Microbiology  
Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics  
Professor Carlos Rocha, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor David O'Regan, School of Physics  
Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor Damien Brennan, School of Nursing & Midwifery  
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent  
Ms Megan O'Connor, Education Officer, Students' Union  
Mr Sameer Shaikh, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Stan Houston, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
Professor Eoin Scanlan, School of Chemistry  
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine  
Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative

In attendance: Ms Lucy Shah, Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching & Learning; 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 Roisin Smith, Quality Officer; Mr Patrick Magee, Director of IT Services (for item USC/20-21/013); Mr Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services, Innovation & Digital Platforms (for item USC/20-21/014); Mr Ronan Hodson, Regional Manager, Global Relations Office (for item USC/20-21/017).

---

**USC/20-21/012 Minutes of the meeting of 15 September 2020**

The minutes of the meeting of 15 September 2020 were approved.

**USC/20-21/009**

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies gave an update on the Open Module Enrolment (OME) rollout. He explained implementation of the project had been originally scheduled for June 2020 but that COVID-19 had pushed the rollout of the project to the start of term. He noted that technical and informational issues had been problematic and pointed out that late changes from schools compounded the issues. He added that a key lesson from recent experiences is that communication with students must improve.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Mr Patrick Magee, Director of IT Services, to the meeting. The Director of IT Services gave an update on the current status of the OME rollout. He advised that OME had closed on Friday, 9 October. He explained that cohort issues with BESS/PPES were almost completely resolved, with the team working to get final choices onto the system that day. He noted that individual student issues were being resolved. He reported that issues are still being logged by students but that these have decreased. He reported that the substantive challenges of the initial two weeks appeared to be diminishing and that he is in regular communication with various stakeholders to ensure that all issues are addressed. He advised that going forward, there are learnings to take from this process around technology, synchronisation and support.

There were various issues raised by members. One member pointed out that in their case it was an architectural issue rather than a programme issue, in that there was a lack of understanding within the DT2 project team on open modules for BESS/PPES students. Other members expressed concerns that good pedagogical imperatives cannot be undermined by systems limitations, and that the student experience of the portal needed to be improved. It was also suggested that there should be a mechanism for schools to validate the data they provide, and that they should be able to see the student view of the system.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged that while the technical issues lie with the DT2 project team, the timing of interactions with other systems is an issue that needs to be resolved. He commented that this process highlighted the need to have up to date, static and comprehensive information in the system confirmed in the system much earlier in the year. In response to this, a member commented that this is a good idea but would be dependent on teaching staff being confirmed in advance, as staff determine the open modules available.

**Decision/Action USC/20-21/013(i):** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies and ADUCA to discuss with members the points of human interaction with the system and how the related complexities can be simplified.

**Decision/Action USC/20-21/013(ii):** The Director of IT Services to convey members' comments to the DT2 Project team to feed into solutions for the issues highlighted.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Director of IT Services, and he withdrew from the meeting.

**USC/20-21/011 (iii)** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the memorandum, 'Approval of Additional Degree Destinations for the Trinity International Foundation Programme' was noted and approved by Council.

**USC/20-21/014 Resumption of Activities**

A memorandum from the Head of Academic Services, Innovation & Digital Platforms, dated 9 September 2020 was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Dr. Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services, Innovation & Digital Platforms to the meeting.

The Head of Academic Services, Innovation & Digital Platforms provided members with the background and context, as well as a brief summary of the memorandum. He noted that there are five key areas for the attention of the schools. He explained that remote teaching has highlighted the importance of inclusive principles and practices being embedded into teaching and learning. He emphasised the importance of consistency in the use of core digital technologies in teaching and learning for captioning lectures. He stated that this standardisation in technologies will support the embedding of inclusive principles and practices. He spoke about the issues around copyright of teaching material and issues around recording staff and students. He noted that the memorandum provides wording for staff to use at start of lectures if they are going to be recorded and advised that transparency when recording is very important. He explained that 2,500 hours of lectures recorded on Panopto are still to be captioned. Responding to a query from a member, the Head of Academic Services, Innovation & Digital Platforms confirmed that material recorded using tools other than Panopto can be uploaded to Panopto for captioning provided these are in mp4 format.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, responding to questions, reported that following consultation with the College Solicitor and the Data Protection Officer, he can confirm that the College is not relying on individual consent from students for recording lectures. In response to this, a member commented that they had received advice in conflict to this stating that students can subsequently withdraw permission for recordings.

Responding to a query from a member, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies clarified that there is no policy that all teaching material is to be recorded or pre-recorded. He advised that if students are attending remotely then materials should be provided where possible. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE) confirmed that it is a recommendation rather than a policy. The Head of Academic Services, Innovation & Digital Platforms pointed out that recording of lectures serves a multiplicity of purposes, beyond providing material for students attending remotely. He advised again that inclusivity is paramount and that the objective is to capture the lecture so it can be submitted for captioning. In response to concerns from members, he also clarified that captioning can be turned off by users so that it is not a distraction. A member expressed concerns that correcting the errors that arise from automated closed captioning takes 2-3 hours per hour of recording. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies responded that that quality control of captioning will need to be monitored and that there is a need to be practical and pragmatic.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Head of Academic Services, Innovation & Digital Platforms, and he withdrew from the meeting.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies drew attention to a request from the Quality Officer that schools should alert the Quality Office of any issues or formal correspondence from accreditation bodies in relation to Covid-19 arrangements, such as in relation to alternate assessments and professional placement issues.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that schools would soon be asked to submit updated plans for teaching and learning in of the context of the latest public health guidelines. In particular, information will be sought on how schools are approaching Capstone project activities, emphasising that these are a high priority. A member noted that he had already submitted two teaching plans for his School and had not received a response to either.

Responding to concerns from members, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that a decision related to moving all teaching online for the remainder of this semester has not yet been made. He acknowledged that students require certainty in this regard but that he could not make this decision unilaterally. The ADUSE advised that the Continuation of Teaching Group, chaired by the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, and that the Phased Resumption of Activities Group, chaired by the Provost, meet weekly, and that that these committees with high-level membership have the capacity make these decisions as the need arises. Responding to a comment from a member, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that Council has central oversight of the academic operation of College. He noted that even if all teaching transferred online, some activities would have to be prioritised for face-to-face teaching, for example in relation to laboratories and capstone projects; this does require central oversight and coordination.

**Decision/Action USC/20-21/014(i):** The Head of Academic Services, Innovation & Digital Platforms is to contact schools within the next two weeks to provide the dates by which schools need to submit information concerning lectures recorded which are not to be captioned, so that automatic captioning can be turned off, where relevant.

**Decision/Action USC/20-21/014(ii):** Information on conflicting advice related to consent and the recording of classes is to be sent to the Head of Academic Services, Innovation & Digital Platforms and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies will follow up with the College Solicitor to confirm the principles and practices around consent for recording classes.

**Decision/Action USC/20-21/014(iii):** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that if members have particular issues they wish to be raised with Resumption of Teaching Group, they should email either himself or the ADUSE.

**Decision/Action USC/20-21/014(iv):** Schools delivering professionally accredited programmes to inform the Quality Office of any discussions with professional bodies in relation to alternative assessment and placement practices by 6 November 2020.

**Decision/Action USC/20-21/014(v):** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies to follow-up with the Director of Teaching and Learning (UG) in the School of Computer Science and Statics in relation to plans for teaching activities previously submitted.

#### **USC/20-21/015 Foundation Scholarship Examinations, 2020-21**

**XX**

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/ Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture, dated 1 October 2020, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies explained that due to emerging public health guidelines, it is now proposed that the Scholarship Examinations in 2020-21 take place as real-time, online exams. He reported that following consultation with USC, this proposal is to be discussed at Board the following day, as Board has oversight of the Scholarship Examinations.

The Senior Lecturer/ Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that discussions are ongoing with Dr Geoff Bradley to explore possible means of proctoring, and that it is a complex issue. He reported that the duration of Scholarship Examination papers will follow the norm, with an added window of time for connectivity issues and uploading scripts. He confirmed that

there will be connectivity tests ahead of time, and that there will be supports for students in real-time to mitigate any issues that may arise.

He advised that a quota system is being proposed, based on the past number of students awarded per faculty, averaged over the last 5 years. He established that while the quota system will change the dynamic for this year, it is not intended to set a precedent for the following years of Scholarship Examinations. He added that no further changes were made to the proposal since last month.

During the discussion, members made comments about the format and content covered by the Scholarship Examinations. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that more extensive changes to the Scholarship Examinations will be discussed by the Foundation Scholarship Examinations Working Group, when this is convened.

A member raised a concern that the introduction of a quota system may not be permissible under the statutes. The Senior Lecturer/ Dean of Undergraduate Studies requested this information be passed onto him so that it may be examined. Responding to a query from another member, the Senior Lecturer/ Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the quota system is likely to be based on faculty averages, rather than school numbers, as school quotas would probably be too small.

**Decision/Action USC/20-21/015(i):** The Director of Teaching and Learning (UG) from the School of Law to send the Senior Lecturer/ Dean of Undergraduate Studies details of an opinion concerning whether or not a quota system is permissible under the statutes.

#### **USC/20-21/016 Trinity Electives Annual Report 2019/20**

A memorandum from the ADUSE and Professor Declan O’Sullivan, dated 20 August 2020, was circulated. The ADUSE brought the meeting through the highlights of the report. She advised USC of the background, purpose and the principles of Trinity Electives (TE) within the Trinity Education Project. She reported that in 2019/20 there were 26 Trinity Electives on offer, and that this had increased to 39 in 2020/21, with more to be reviewed for the following year. She commented that the student survey had yielded broadly positive responses from students about their experiences. She gave thanks to Ms Sheena Brown, members of IT Services and the Academic Registry for their support.

The Senior Lecturer/ Dean of Undergraduate Studies queried whether there is a need for calibration of the grade profiles of modules, as some modules had a higher than expected grade profile. Responding to this, the ADUSE advised that there is a feedback system in place, with the Court of Examiners report conveying the overall grade profile across all Trinity Electives. She reported that the newly elected Trinity Electives Sub-Committee will oversee the quality control of Trinity Electives, calculating the mean data over time. She also noted that Trinity Elective module co-ordinators with a high grade profile have been encouraged to look at their assessments. Commenting on a query from a member, she confirmed that while Trinity Electives will usually be designed from a school perspective, as they are dependent on staff expertise, they can be responsive to demand from students. She cited the student petition which requested a Trinity Elective on ‘Black Studies’ earlier in the year; this is being actively explored for development.

#### **USC/20-21/017 Revisions to Direct Undergraduate Admissions Requirements**

**XX**

A memorandum from Admissions Officer and Regional Manager, Global Relations Office, dated 29 September 2020, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Mr Ronan Hodson, Regional Manager, Global Relations Office to the meeting.

The Regional Manager spoke briefly to the memorandum. He advised that recruitment for the next admission cycle is due to begin on 1 November 2020, and that it is desired that this

new schema be applied to all new applications. He explained that this new system will facilitate the future expansion of application requirements to include other curricula and qualifications that are not currently served by the system, thereby improving the process of diversifying and internationalising the student body.

**Decision/Action USC/20-21/017(i):** USC supported the proposal for Revisions to Direct Undergraduate Admissions Requirements and recommended it to Council.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Regional Manager, and he withdrew from the meeting.

**USC/20-21/018 Any other business**

An email from Dr. Deirdre Stritch, Approval and Monitoring Manager, QQI Awards on the subject 'Essay Mill Provider identified', was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged that essay mills are a huge potential problem considering examinations are currently taking the format of take-home essays. He reported that the essay mill provider identified in the e-mail advertises specific examples of previous work done for students on their website, with details of the course, module and university included. He commented that because these essays are original pieces of work, they cannot be detected by Turnitin. The Students' Union Education Officer advised that National Academic Integrity Week would take place from 19-23 October. She advised that she has been exploring this issue and suggested that it is a systemic issue resulting, in part, from the pressures that students experience. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed with the Students' Union Education Officer that this issue needs to be examined in terms of both the conduct itself and the causes behind it.

Responding to a request, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that this issue would be included on future USC agendas.

The Quality Officer advised members that a link to all events could be found on the Quality Office website.

**Decision/Action USC/20-21/017:** The Students' Union Education Officer requested members to contact her if they have any contributions to make in terms of the use of essay mills and National Academic Integrity Week.