



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 2 November 2021 at 2.00 pm via Zoom.

Present: Professor David Shepherd, 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 (ADUSE)
Professor Graeme Murdock, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA)
Professor Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts
Professor Mark Sweetnam, School of English
Professor Sarah Hamill, School of Law
Professor Ciara O'Hagan, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Margaret Walshe, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Clare Kelly, School of Psychology
Professor Michelle D'Arcy, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Julie Byrne, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Jacob Erickson, School of Religion
Professor Vincent Kelly, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Iouri Gounko, School of Chemistry
Professor Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Kevin Kelly, School of Engineering
Professor Juan Pablo Labrador, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics
Professor Carlos Rocha, School of Natural Sciences
Professor David O'Regan, School of Physics
Professor Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
Professor Damien Brennan, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent
Ms Bev Genockey, Education Officer, Students' Union

Apologies: Professor Andrew Loxley, School of Education
Professor Robert Armstrong, School of Histories and Humanities
Mr Yannick Gloster, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Ms Beibhinn Coman, Director of Marketing (for item USC/21-22/013); Mr Patrick Magee, Director of IT Services (for item USC/21-22/014); Professor Rachel Hoare, Academic Director of Trinity-INC (for item USC/21-22/016).

USC/21-22/011 Minutes of the meeting of 28 September 2021

The minutes of the meeting of the 28 September 2021 were approved.

USC/21-22/012 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

USC/21-22/013 Trinity Undergraduate Open Day – Spring 2022

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A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 26 October 2021, was circulated. The Director of Marketing, Ms Beibhinn Coman, was welcomed to the meeting.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke to the item, commenting that the upcoming Open Day would take place on 6 November 2021 as a virtual event. Whilst this has clear benefits, such as allowing international students to attend talks, he noted that that it would be good to enable an in-person experience and allow prospective students to visit the Trinity campus.

The Director of Marketing added that November 2019 was the last time that Trinity had held an in-person undergraduate Open Day. She noted that the other Irish universities hold events in spring and that it is proposed Trinity would host a second Open Day on 9 April. This could be run as either an in-person event, with some online elements, or with all talks online, with the in-person activities limited to campus tours and meeting academic staff.

Responding to a query about whether this would be a one-off event or if it would run in future years, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that this could only be considered after the event has run to evaluate its benefits.

Whilst there was general support for holding an in-person event it was commented by some members, concerned about work-life balance, that this would require academic and professional staff to work an additional Saturday within the year. It was suggested that a policy should be adopted related to such events which would, for example, allow time-off in lieu of Saturday work.

Action/Decision

013.01: USC supported the proposal to hold an additional Open Day on 9 April 2022, with in-person talks accommodated along with virtual elements.

013.02: Plans for the April event will be developed further and brought back to USC.

013.03 The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies to communicate comments related to a policy on time-off in lieu, for staff who work on Saturdays for required events, to the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer.

The Director of Marketing withdrew from the meeting.

USC/21-22/014 Digital Trinity 2 Update

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted the huge efforts made by academic and professional staff to enable online pathway and module selection, for applicable courses, and advised the meeting that he has been tasked with considering the next steps, following the end of the Digital Trinity 2 project (DT2). He welcomed Mr Patrick Magee, Director of IT Services, to the meeting.

The Director of IT Services provided an update on the activities to-date by way of a presentation, which provided information on the following areas:

- The annual 16-step process
- Student pathway choices
- Set-up statistics for 2021
- Online enrolment record – constituent parts
- Online module enrolment statistics for 2021
- 2021/22 Pathway choices, Trinity Elective and New Minor Subject allocations
- 2021/22 Online module enrolment – student engagement
- Open Modules – range of choice

- Pathways – change of mind analysis
- Online module enrolment – student and staff queries

The Director of IT Services highlighted the complexity and the breadth of student choice in the system across pathway selections, subject combinations and individual module selections. He commented that some processes run twice, for the first time during the summer after the assessment results are released and for the second time, after reassessment results become available. He noted that much attention is given to online module enrolment, however, this is only one step in the process.

During the discussion that followed a number of members commended the Director of IT Services, and the DT2 Team, for their work on such a complex system of processes.

A number of comments and queries were made:

- Will online module enrolment include additional schools in future?
- How is a module broken down between those for whom it is core mandatory, core elective, an open module or taken as a visiting student module?
- Erasmus exchanges are not adequately accommodated in the system
- Frontloading or backloading of modules, in a specific subject, should be made possible for students on two-subject programmes in cases where they can only take one subject while studying abroad.
- Would it be possible to separate the enrolment processes for Semester 1 and Semester 2 modules?
- Clear roles, responsibilities and decision-making routes must be drawn-up in relation to student requests to change pathways; it is currently unclear whether or not these go via the student's Tutor to be processed by the Students Cases team.
- The 'first come, first served', basis for Open Module enrolment is causing issues in relation to some students not being able to complete pre-requisite modules, and can be stressful for students if they encounter problems while making their module selections outside office hours, as they cannot access support.
- Late pathway changes are problematic, with students appearing on modules without prior consultation and having missed a considerable amount of module content.
- It would be helpful if some guidance was published to help schools to achieve desired outputs in the system.

Responding to some of the points raised, the Director of IT Services commented that he hoped more schools would be included in the rollout of online module enrolment but that this would depend on fitting into the rules of the common architecture and meeting certain annual deadlines. In relation to module quotas, he confirmed that the system holds two quotas per module; the core mandatory total and a quota for everything else. He acknowledged that Erasmus and other types of study abroad are not supported adequately by the system, however, he noted that DT2 did not receive instructions from the Trinity Education Project team on this area. He confirmed that separating Semester 1 and Semester 2 enrolments would be technically possible, however, this would require a policy change. In relation to module changes, he advised that there is a change of mind facility within the first two weeks, thereafter, the system is closed to all students apart from incoming first years. Any such pathway changes should have required academic consultation and approval. This will be investigated to ensure the system did not allow standard module changes after the stated two-week period.

A member spoke of the connection between module enrolment and the production of the examination timetable, which is underpinned by a snapshot of module enrolment data, taken on a certain date. This means that any enrolments after this date do not feed into the relevant examination timetable. The Director of IT Services advised that he would look into the matter.

It was noted by an attendee that the DT2 team had supported online pathway and module enrolment over the last two years, however, there appear to be some significant gaps in functionality that would need to be addressed, before responsibility for online enrolment transfers to the Academic Registry.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed that time is of the essence and that the right people must be involved in decision making and the development of functionality. He reiterated that he had been asked to consider the next steps in relation to online enrolment for students, following the end of the DT2 project.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Director of IT Services.

Action/Decision

014.01: The Director of IT Services to investigate the effect of late module enrolments on the production of the examination timetable and whether or not the change of mind facility enabled students to change pathway/modules after the stated two-week cut-off.

The Director of IT Services withdrew from the meeting.

USC/21-22/015 Assessment and Academic Progression Policy

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A memorandum from Ms Linda Darbey, the Assistant Academic Secretary, dated 27 October 2021, was circulated, with an attached revised Assessment and Academic Progression Policy.

The Assistant Academic Secretary noted that the enclosed policy had been reviewed within Academic Affairs and that she had consulted widely with key staff in other areas. She outlined the main changes and noted that some editorial changes had also been made. She particularly highlighted sub-section 6.12, on academic misconduct, which is likely to be updated after the working group on academic misconduct/plagiarism makes its recommendations.

Responding to a query, the Assistant Academic Secretary confirmed that this policy does not apply to the micro-credentials project as the latter is currently in a pilot phase. She stated that she had spoken to the Micro-Credentials Programme Director who advised that a learner handbook is in development, and that policies relating to micro-credentials, such as how these can be combined to lead to an award, will be included.

A member queried if there were plans to appoint a person within each school to support areas like innovation in assessment, as an alternative to schools having to contact Academic Practice. This would have the benefit of advice and resources being tailored to a particular school's needs and would enable a more proactive and strategic approach to teaching and learning methods. The Assistant Academic Secretary noted the importance of such a discussion but advised that this would have to be addressed at a higher level in the University rather than within the Assessment and Academic Progression Policy. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that this issue had come up in several of his meetings with Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate).

It was noted by a member that the examination regulations in the Calendar Part II should include specific mention of online assessments. It was suggested by another member that the wording in sub-section 6.8 should be amended to take account of the different formats which student handbooks take; it is not always possible to provide individual module assessment details. It was also commented that sub-section 6.6 could better reflect the status of students as partners in learning. The Assistant Academic Secretary confirmed that she would discuss the wording following the meeting.

Action/Decision

015.01: The General Regulations within the Calendar Part II should be revised to include rules related to online assessments.

015.02: The Assistant Academic Secretary to contact the ADUCA to discuss the wording within sub-section 6.8 and to amend as necessary.

015.03: The Assistant Academic Secretary to amend the wording of sub-section 6.6 to better reflect the status of students as partners in learning.

015.04: Subject to the changes outlined in **015.02** and **015.03**, USC supported the revised Assessment and Academic Progression Policy and recommended it to Council for approval.

USC/21-22/016 Introduction to the Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project (Trinity-INC)

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Professor Rachel Hoare, Academic Director of Trinity-INC, to the meeting to present information on the Trinity-INC project.

The Academic Director of Trinity-INC played three videos, created by students, in which they recorded their thoughts on what constitutes an inclusive curriculum. She spoke to her presentation providing information on the following areas:

- Trinity-INC project goals
- The four project pillars
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Summer Student Partner Programme
- Resources created by students
- Objectives for the first year of the project (from September 2021)
- Inclusivity tips and resources and alternative formats for students
- Further student comments on inclusivity

During the discussion, the following comments were made:

- The inclusive curriculum can be an unwieldy term encompassing many different aspects like pedagogy, curriculum design and student agency, and, as such, it would be useful to provide distinct guidance for these areas.
- It would be helpful if there was a compendium of inclusivity statements which could be reproduced in student handbooks.
- In terms of students as partners in learning, it was commented that long term engagement with students is beneficial and provides a real opportunity to discover what is, and what is not, working in the curriculum.
- Staff inclusivity champions are an important part of this project, however, it would be helpful if knowledge in this area was spread among various staff members.
- Certain academic regulations and processes are quite rigid and do not necessarily support an inclusive College community.
- Students need to see themselves in the curriculum.
- Blackboard does not seem to be the most accessible virtual learning platform.
- Because inclusivity can seem overwhelming, it would be useful to have clear and concrete guidance.
- Care must be taken to avoid this work falling only on early-career academics.

Responding to some of the comments made, the Academic Director of Trinity-INC noted that adopting a UDL approach to teaching and learning would be of great benefit. She also commented that there are some very easy steps that can be taken, such as enabling Blackboard Ally for modules, to allow students to download content in different formats from the online platform. She noted that knowledge around inclusivity is constantly evolving and consideration of the issues cannot end with the end of the project; it is important that ways are found to embed inclusivity into the institutional culture.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Academic Director of Trinity-INC for her presentation and commented on the interesting and useful discussion.

The Academic Director of Trinity-INC withdrew from the meeting.

USC/21-22/017 Any other business

- i. Speaking about the opening of campus, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that he and the Dean of Graduate Studies would soon send a joint communication to students who might be concerned about missing classes should they have to self-isolate. The key message to students in this situation will be to stay home and protect others in the community. He noted that such students would have to be supported through the provision of resources, such as recorded lectures. He acknowledged that some staff members, particularly those in high-risk health categories were likely to be feeling apprehensive about returning to work and advised that information is available on the staff FAQ section of the Return to Campus Website <https://www.tcd.ie/about/return-to-campus/#staff-faq>.
- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that he had started to meet Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate), on an individual basis, to hear about issues relating to undergraduate provision within schools and to discuss suggestions for USC.
- iii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies drew the attention of the meeting to the Academic Affairs newsletter under Section C of the agenda.

USC/21-22/018 Minutes (Section B)

USC noted and approved the following sets of minutes.

- i. **Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee**
Minutes of the meeting of 21 September 2021
- ii. **USC/GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials**
Minutes of the meeting of 15 April 2021.
Minutes of the meeting of 11 May 2021.
Minutes of the meeting of 16 June 2021.

USC/21-22/019 Items for noting (Section C)

USC noted and approved, where necessary, the following items/documents:

- i. **Membership Micro-credential Sub-committee of USC-GSC**
Memorandum from the Chair of the USC/GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials, dated 18 October 2021.
- ii. **Academic Affairs newsletter**
<https://sway.office.com/ARS6nKWJ8JTX7TII?ref=Link>