



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 22 February 2022 at 2.00 pm, online.

Present: Professor David Shepherd, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Professor Catherine McCabe, Dean of Students
Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor
Professor Graeme Murdock, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA)
Professor Áine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE)
Professor Jennifer O'Meara, School of Creative Arts
Professor Andrew Loxley, School of Education
Professor Mark Sweetnam, School of English
Professor Robert Armstrong, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor David Kenny, School of Law
Professor Martin Worthington, 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 David O'Regan, School of Physics
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 Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science
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: Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Professor Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
Mr Yannick Gloster, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary; Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Director of Academic Practice; Ms Roisin Smith, Quality Officer; Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs, Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director of the Academic Registry (for item USC/21-22/040); Dr Pauline Rooney (for item USC/21-22/042).

USC/21-22/037 Minutes of the meeting of 25 January 2022

The minutes of the meeting of 25 January 2022 were approved.

USC/21-22/038 Matters arising

- i. **USC/21-22/029:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that an update had been provided by the Director of the Academic Registry to confirm that lecturing staff details are not a critical requirement for online module enrolment; these details can be added later to the timetabling system, CMIS.

- ii. **USC/21-22/030:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that Council approved the pausing of the procedure related to the non-submission of coursework and absences from examinations for the current academic year. He also noted that further advice had issued to members on the use of certain module result codes, since the last meeting of USC.
- iii. **USC/21-22/031:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that further information from Human Resources related to PPS numbers had been sent to members. He advised that he had been contacted by several schools this year and had approved the virtual attendance of external examiners for a number of courts of examiners.

USC/21-22/039 Senior Lecturer's Updates

- i. On the topic of online module enrolment, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that a dedicated e-mail address had been set up and queries should be sent to ome@tcd.ie.
- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that it is expected that the COVID-19 situation would continue to improve, meaning that it should be more straightforward to plan for Semester 2 assessments. He noted that the tight timeline for marking and holding courts of examiners in May would be discussed with the Academic Registry, to see what, if anything, can be done to alleviate pressures at this time of year.
- iii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that Council had approved terms of reference for the Academic Integrity Working Group and that its membership is currently being finalised. Members will include a Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning (DUTL), the SU Education Officer and the Assistant Academic Secretary. Assistance and inputs will be sought from a broad range of stakeholders, as the work of the group progresses.
- iv. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that USC, at its meeting of 2 November 2021, had supported the hosting of an extra Trinity Open Day on 9 April 2022. Given the additional workload involved in mounting an assessment session for deferrals during February, and given the recent strong CAO data for Trinity, he advised that he had spoken to the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and to the Director of Marketing to suggest that this should not proceed. He asked members to indicate any objections to the cancellation and none were put forward. He added that the Director of Marketing will offer direct marketing support to schools, where needed.

USC/21-22/040 Academic Registry Annual Report 2020/21

The Academic Registry Annual Report 2020/21, dated December 2021, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Ms Jennifer Pepper, the Director of the Academic Registry, to the meeting. She spoke to the item via a presentation and provided data in relation to the following areas:

- Academic Registry 2020/21 – at a glance (figures related to the student lifecycle)
- 2020/21 Initiatives
- 2020/21 Overall Student Body
- Applications and Admissions
- Student Finance
- Student Case Management
- Assessment and Progression
- Graduation

Commenting on the significant increase (75%) in student cases during 2020/21, linked to COVID-19 assessment mitigation measures, she commended the work of the Student Cases Team, the Senior Tutor and College Tutors, and academic and professional staff members

across the University. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies extended his thanks to all involved.

A member also commended the Academic Registry for recent positive developments which have led to greater transparency and collaboration with schools. The Director of the Academic Registry highlighted the importance of working with schools and programme offices, noting that this collaboration was integral to being able to deal with the huge increase in student cases. She emphasised that this data is about the whole College community and not just the Academic Registry.

Responding to a question on the increase in the number of Entrance Exhibitions and the expanded geographical spread of recipients, the Director of the Academic Registry agreed that the changed criteria has improved representation from across Ireland. She suggested that the overall increase in numbers may have been related to students studying harder for the Leaving Certificate, since there was little else to do during periods of lockdown.

A member, noting the decrease in examination sittings during 2020/21, commented that they may increase again as Trinity returns to normal. He asked that this be discussed at a future meeting of USC, to ensure that College is prepared, since many students and staff will have little experience of in-person examinations. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that there will need to be discussion about the design and delivery of assessments into the future and on which methods are most effective.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Director of the Academic Registry for attending the meeting and for her presentation.

The Director of the Academic Registry withdrew from the meeting.

USC/21-22/041 Trinity Electives Annual Report 2020/21

A memorandum, from the ADUSE, dated 10 February 2022, was circulated with an enclosed report, dated November 2021. The ADUSE, as Chair of the Trinity Elective Sub-committee (TESC), brought the meeting through key areas in the report.

She noted that 2020/21 was the second year of the delivery of Trinity Electives, with 39 modules on offer. A further two modules were supported by the TESC during 2020/21, for delivery in the current academic year. She noted that some Trinity Electives had switched semesters this year to provide a better balance of places across the year, not only to ensure sufficient capacity but also to help avoid modules running below their minimum quotas.

She commented that the student survey, administered by the Quality Office, had yielded broadly positive responses from students about their experiences, however, she added that she would like to see a higher response rate. Many module co-ordinators also seek feedback from their students.

She noted that the current year, which saw the third year of the delivery of Trinity Electives and the further embedding of the undergraduate curriculum structures, would provide more stable data for analysis and enable more accurate projections for capacity requirements.

She paid tribute to all of the module co-ordinators and to those supporting the delivery of Trinity Electives, including Ms Kelly Byrne and Mr Shane Coultry in the Academic Registry, and Ms Ciara Conlon and Ms Sorcha De Brunner in Academic Affairs.

A couple of members raised concerns about the possibility of some Trinity Electives running with very small student numbers, given the resource and staff time implications. In response the ADUSE advised that module co-ordinators are asked to submit maximum and minimum numbers annually and that very few modules indicate very low quotas. She added

that module co-ordinators are asked to commit to offering their modules for a minimum of four years to ensure a stable offering of Trinity Electives.

Responding to a query about students from the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics taking modules delivered by schools in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and vice-versa, the ADUSE commented that the allocation algorithm ensures, as far as possible, a good mixture of students from different academic backgrounds in each Trinity Elective.

There was a general discussion about the workload associated with Trinity Electives since a significant majority of students, responding to the student survey, indicated workloads of 60 hours or fewer, which is about half the required workload for 5 ECTS credits. The ADUSE commented that the TESC looks at workloads carefully when reviewing new Trinity Elective proposals to try to ensure appropriate workloads and consistency across modules. She added that there seemed to be a mismatch between the quantitative and qualitative responses on this point, and that students might not be estimating their input accurately. A member commented that it is likely that workloads for these modules are in line with other modules across College, given the comparatively short academic year in Trinity. Another member added that when compared to universities in southern Europe, it would appear that Trinity has fewer contact hours and a lower workload.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the ADUSE for presenting the annual report and commended all those involved in ensuring the delivery and support of Trinity Electives.

USC/21-22/042 Trinity Student and Staff Experiences of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment at Trinity 2020/21

A presentation, dated February 2022, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Dr Pauline Rooney, Academic Developer, to the meeting. Dr Rooney explained the aims of the survey, which were to identify digital teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) strategies that worked well for staff and students; explore staff and student concerns and preferences regarding future programme delivery and assessment; determine the professional development and support needs of staff as they prepare digital TLA approaches within their programmes. She outlined the profile of staff and student respondents and brought the meeting through the findings and recommendations in relation to each of the main themes of the survey. She highlighted the following recommendations:

Digital teaching and learning

- Develop the structures and resources to support teaching staff and students to develop pedagogic skills and competences required to enhance digital TLA at Trinity.
- Agree and disseminate a shared understanding of blended, hybrid and online learning at Trinity.
- Agree the TLA practices to be continued post-pandemic and revise existing TLA policies accordingly.

Digital Assessment

- Prioritise an institutional focus on academic integrity in a digital context, including the development of relevant policies and practices that:
 - develop students' understanding of academic integrity;
 - explore strategies for mitigating plagiarism.

Communication

- Develop an institutional feedback policy to support student agency and feedback literacy.
- Develop communication strategies at programme and/or module level within schools.

Technologies

- Review and consolidate Trinity's suite of supported technologies.
- Provide staff guidance on selection and use of third-party technologies.

During the discussion, it was commented that whilst there is increasing pressure to use digital tools, their use must be underpinned by appropriate pedagogical principles and practices. Another member, while welcoming the digital skills developed by staff and students over the recent past, highlighted the importance of the on-campus student experience and cautioned against using the last two years, during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a benchmark for future developments. The use of digital tools outside those supported by College was highlighted and it was suggested that existing systems and resources be reviewed to offer more bespoke technologies. Finally, it was commented that there are examples of good practice from other third-level institutions in relation to policies on student feedback.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that a comprehensive digital TLA strategy is to be developed. He thanked Dr Rooney for her presentation and attendance at the meeting.

Dr Rooney withdrew from the meeting.

USC/21-22/043 Collaborative Learning

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies introduced the item by referring to the previous discussion at USC, on 30 November 2021, concerning results from the National Student Survey 2020/21. He noted that Trinity did not score well on the collaborative learning indicator but added that the institutional score masks the fact that some schools are doing very well in this area. He explained that DUTLs from the Schools of Creative Arts, Computer Science and Statistics, and Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, representing a school from each faculty, would outline some of the practices utilised in their undergraduate programmes.

In relation to Drama Studies and Film in the School of Creative Arts, it was noted that practical work was generally collaborative and that even in more traditional theory-based modules, collaborative elements are used, such as peer-to-peer feedback. Where groupwork counts for a significant proportion of the marks for a module, mechanisms such as requiring students to complete a self-assessment, covering their thoughts on the groupwork process and to highlight their contribution, provides a useful safeguard.

Regarding the Computer Science programme and Management Science and Information Systems Studies, specific collaborative projects and problem-based case study work were outlined. It was noted that, by its nature, software development is a collective effort. In terms of learning environments, it was felt that computer laboratories provided space for organic collaboration in ways that the Library and classrooms do not.

In relation to the Pharmacy programme, it was noted that interprofessional learning and laboratory work were key activities. A third-year project, where students are encouraged to work together on a poster presentation to academic staff, was highlighted. It was noted that some group activities did not work so well in practice, such as discussion boards or breakout rooms in Blackboard.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the three members for their reflections on what seemed to work in relation to collaborative learning and what does not. He expressed the wish that this item will lead to some useful discussions within other schools.

USC/21-22/044 Any other business

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reminded members that the Institutional Review is scheduled to take place from 7-11 March 2022. He noted that some members of USC would be participating in meetings with the review panel and thanked them in advance.
- ii. He advised that the USC meeting due to take place on 19 April 2022 is to be rescheduled to 21 April 2022. He noted that the meeting would take place at the normal time and that Ms De Brunner would follow-up with revised meeting invitations.

USC/21-22/045 Minutes (Section B)

USC noted and approved, where necessary, the following sets of minutes.

- i. **Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee**
Minutes of the meeting of 11 January 2022.
- ii. **Widening Participation Group**
Final minutes, meeting of the 27 April 2021.
- iii. **RIAM Associated College Degrees Committee**
Minutes of the meeting of 10 November 2021.
Minutes of the meeting of 2 February 2022.
- iv. **Trinity Electives Sub-Committee**
Minutes of the meeting of 24 November 2021.

USC/21-22/046 Items for noting (Section C)

USC noted and approved, the following item:

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- i. **New Combinations for Trinity Joint Honours commencing 2023-24**
Memorandum from the Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee, dated 9 February 2022, with supporting documentation outlining two new combinations for entry in 2023/24:
 - History of Art and Architecture and Drama Studies
 - Economics and Computer Science

The quotas for the subjects in the latter combinations will increase, with an additional seven places in Economics and an additional five places in Computer Science.