



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 17 May 2022 at 2.00 pm, in the Board Room.

Present: Professor David Shepherd, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Professor Catherine McCabe, Dean of Students
Professor Gerry Wright, Pro-Senior Tutor
Professor Áine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE)
Professor Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School
Professor Jennifer O'Meara, School of Creative Arts
Professor Martin Worthington, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor David Kenny, School of Law
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 Vincent Kelly, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Iouri Gounko, School of Chemistry
Professor Kevin Kelly, School of Engineering
Professor Juan Pablo Labrador, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics
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
Ms Bev Genockey, Education Officer, Students' Union
Mr Yannick Gloster, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Graeme Murdock, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA)
Professor Andrew Loxley, School of Education
Professor Mark Sweetnam, School of English
Professor Robert Armstrong, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Jacob Erickson, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies
Professor Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent
Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary; Ms Roisin Smith, Quality Officer; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Mr Ewan Tushkanov; Mrs Clare Whelan (for item USC/21-22/075).

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Mr Ewan Tushkanov to the meeting, noting that he will be the Student Representative on USC in 2022/23.

USC/21-22/068 Minutes of the meeting of 21 April 2022

The minutes of the meeting of 21 April 2022 were approved. It was noted that the title of the School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies would be corrected on the first page.

USC/21-22/069 Matters arising

- i. **USC/21-22/060** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that advice had been sought from the Academic Registry about whether or not degree results are rounded in SITS and, if so, the effect this would have on a student's eligibility to receive a gold medal. He confirmed that this information would be passed on when received.
- ii. **USC/21-22/061** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that Council approved the assessment contingency dates in May and August 2022, as recommended by USC.
- iii. **USC/21-22/062(i)** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the change to the admissions requirements to the programme in Deaf Studies, for deaf and hard of hearing students, was approved by Council.
- iv. **USC/21-22/062(ii)** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that Council approved the change in the non-EU competitive admissions band for the integrated programme in Computer Science.
- v. **USC/21-22/062(iii)** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that Council approved the proposal to make unconditional offers to applicants who had completed the India Standard 12 Examinations, based on predicted grades, for one additional year.
- vi. **USC/21-22/063** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the two Trinity Electives considered at the last meeting of USC, 'Life and Death in Data: Plagues, Pestilence, and Pandemics', and 'Systems – the Science of Everything', were approved by Council for delivery in 2022/23.
- vii. **USC/21-22/064** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that Council had approved the Senior Lecturer's Annual Report for 2020/21.

USC/21-22/070 Senior Lecturer's Updates

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted that Leaving Certificate results are likely to be delayed again in 2022. He acknowledged the frustration that this is causing and the impacts that this would have on planning for the start of the academic year. He noted that the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer is making representations on behalf of Trinity at a national level.
- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies referred to the bespoke open module from the School of Education, considered by USC in March 2022, and noted that the module has been retitled as 'Active Learning and Inclusion in the Digital Age'. He also noted that the in-person mobility component has been removed, without affecting its eligibility to meet the HEA's terms and conditions of funding.
- iii. Speaking about Ukraine, he confirmed that he and the Dean of Graduate Studies continue to co-chair a group related to current and incoming students. He advised that currently it is not possible to quantify student numbers nor timelines; queries should be referred to global.response@tcd.ie. He commented that there are considerations related to matching capacity to potential student interests and that care must be taken not to undermine Ukrainian universities. Responding to a question about student exchange programmes with Russian institutions, he confirmed that these would not go ahead; he invited members to contact him following the meeting if their programme is affected by this decision.
- iv. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted some expected topics for discussion in the coming year, which included 'decolonising the curriculum', following the publication of Trinity's report on its colonial past, and expected recommendations from Professor Jane Stout, the Vice-President for Biodiversity and Climate Action. In relation to the latter, he confirmed that she is conducting research over the summer and that USC will give considerable time to discussing this matter in the Autumn. Two members spoke keenly of the global existential threats arising from the climate crisis. They exhorted USC to give significant consideration to this issue over the coming year and to agree tangible

actions in relation to undergraduate education. It was noted by one that Trinity has a narrow window of time in which it can show real leadership on this issue. It was queried if there would be resources made available to help schools to take actions and to develop their curricula. In response, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that College would have to await the recommendations on governance and finances proposed by the Vice-President for Biodiversity and Climate Action. It was commented by a member that schools should not view this as additional work, rather environmental concerns and related actions should be built into existing structures and integrated into the mainstreamed work of the institution. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that this issue is firmly on the Provost's agenda and he agreed that any developments in this regard cannot be viewed as separate initiatives, if they are to succeed.

- v. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies updated USC on recent events in relation to academic integrity and misconduct. He advised that the Working Group on Academic Integrity had developed a statement on integrity, with a number of underpinning principles, which was approved by Council; he brought the meeting through each principle via a presentation. He noted that the principles relate to integrity in a general sense, and, therefore, he hoped that these would provide guidance for all areas of Trinity, beyond the focus of academic integrity.

In the discussion that followed, the statement and principles were welcomed. It was cautioned by a member that any resulting policies and procedures should not be bureaucratic. Another member commented on the difficulty faced by schools in proving academic misconduct, particularly in relation to cases of contract cheating, and that, in updating or developing procedures, the Working Group must ensure that these are underpinned by robust and fair standards.

USC/21-22/071 Gold Medals

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate, dated 13 May 2022, was circulated with appended information on programme gold medal thresholds. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate introduced the item, noting that Council and Board approved new overarching gold medal criteria in 2018, which set the minimum degree result threshold at 75% overall. He referred to the recent collection of programme information by the Academic Registry, and noted that TEP Phase 1 courses all appear to be operating within the new criteria. The list of TEP Phase 1 courses and their gold medal thresholds have been circulated to Board, for approval on 18 May 2022. He noted, however, that TEP Phase 2 course information shows a different picture, whereby it can be seen that the new criteria have not been communicated as necessary to all students. He proposed, therefore, that the old pre-TEP criteria and thresholds should apply for one more year, so as not to disadvantage students who have already completed the first year of a two-year degree cycle. This would mean that the new thresholds would apply to students undertaking the Junior Sophister year in TEP Phase 2 programmes in 2022/23. USC supported the delay in the implementation of the new minimum thresholds for one year in relation to TEP Phase 2 courses.

In response to queries, Ms De Brunner confirmed that a student who had taken a reassessment due to failing a module in a year that counts towards the degree result would not be eligible for a gold medal, however, she also clarified that students who were granted a reassessment in order to improve their degree result in the previous two academic years (2019/20 and 2020/21), under Covid-19 mitigating measures, would be eligible, since Council had approved a derogation in this circumstance. In answer to a question about thresholds, she confirmed that programme owners can set the threshold higher than 75%.

Referring to the second matter raised in the memorandum, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that, in addition to approving a minimum degree result

threshold of 75%, Board also approved an additional criterion whereby students graduating with a joint-honours or a major with minor degree, would also need to achieve a 70% minimum in each named subject. He advised that this would pose some difficulty for schools, since subject results are not currently calculated in SITS; feedback from the Academic Registry, however, indicates that a report could be developed to assist with this calculation. He also referred to an analysis of TSM results over a three-year period which indicated that setting the threshold at 75% overall, without the additional requirement of 70% in each named subject, would likely yield a similar number of gold medallists, and therefore, would be a fair model. A member suggested that the 70% additional subject requirement should perhaps be retained for joint-honours degree recipients. Ms De Brunner responded that one of the pre-TEP Gold Medal categories was similar to the overall 75% degree average and that the analysis of TSM results' data using the new degree calculation indicated that this would provide a similar number of candidates. USC supported the removal of the additional requirement that students must also achieve a 70% minimum in each named subject.

Action/Decision

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071.01: USC supported the recommendation that pre-TEP Gold Medal criteria should apply to TEP Phase 2 courses for one more year, i.e., to Junior Sophister students in 2021/22 and Senior Sophister students in 2022/23. The new gold medal thresholds should start to apply to students completing the Junior Sophister year on these courses in 2022/23.

071.02: USC supported the recommendation to remove the additional requirement that for those graduating with a joint-honours or major with minor degree, a minimum 70% must be earned in each named subject.

071.03: Following the relevant Council and Board meetings in June, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies is to issue a clear communication in relation to gold medal criteria.

USC/21-22/072 Pathway Changes

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate, dated 13 May 2022, was circulated, with an appended procedure approved by the Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke to the item, noting the excellent work carried out by the Undergraduate Common Architecture Office in creating a procedure for late pathway changes for students in the Trinity Joint Honours programme and for students on single honours programmes, where they had picked up a new minor subject. He noted that there are a number of courses which, while operating within the common architecture structures, do not come under the oversight of the Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee. He drew the attention of the committee to the procedure outlined in the memorandum, which drew significantly on the appended procedure, and proposed that it apply to these additional programmes.

A member questioned the practices and timelines in other schools in relation to permitting students to change the optional modules. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that he would query this with schools.

Action/Decision

072.01: USC approved the pathway changes procedure, as circulated, and noted that this will apply to programmes operating within the common architecture, but which do not come under the remit of the Common Architecture Governance Committee.

072.02: The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies to query practices and timelines with schools, in relation to allowing students to change optional modules.

USC/21-22/073 Calendar Changes for 2022/23

A memorandum from Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs, dated 11 May 2022, was circulated along with the following sections of the Calendar Part II for 2022/23:

- i. General Regulations
- ii. Common Architecture
- iii. Trinity Joint Honours
- iv. Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
- v. Faculty of Health Sciences
- vi. Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- vii. Foundation Scholarship
- viii. Validated Courses

Speaking to the General Regulations, Ms De Brunner highlighted some changes to §96 and §97 of the section on plagiarism; these had been discussed with the Junior Dean and the Dean of Graduate Studies and would also be included in the Calendar Part III. She noted that the regulation in relation to gold medals (§31) would be amended to reflect the discussion a little earlier in the meeting. This wording will be circulated to USC members but will be subject to Council and Board approving the related gold medal recommendations. She commented that other changes to the General Regulations were minor in nature.

In relation to the faculty and courses sections, she advised that she had been in touch with schools and course offices recently with suggested changes. These changes generally related to rewording and re-formatting of entries to take account of the fact that TEP Phase 1 courses had now reached the Senior Sophister year under the new degree calculations and TEP Phase 2 courses would do so in 2022/23. She noted that she had received some responses to confirm the changes and would follow up with the remaining schools by the end of May/start of June, to finalise their entries.

Action/Decision

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073.01: USC noted and approved the changes to the General Regulations and noted that Ms De Brunner would circulate a further change to the regulation on gold medals.

073.02: USC noted the changes to the faculty and course sections.

USC/21-22/074 Curriculum Glossary

A memorandum from Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs, dated 11 May 2022 was circulated along with a draft glossary related to curriculum terms. Speaking to the glossary, Ms De Brunner highlighted the context for its development and noted that whilst some of the terms and definitions are new, others have come from approved policies and procedures and a previous TEP glossary. She noted that if approved, design work would be carried out in the summer to ensure that it is easy to use as a resource. She added that it will be a 'living' document in that, apart from standard periodic reviews, terms and definitions arising from curriculum projects, such as Postgraduate Renewal or Micro-credentials, will be added as approved.

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Action/Decision

074.01: USC supported the Curriculum Glossary and recommended it to Council.

USC/21-22/075 Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement – Supporting Student Success through Clinical Teacher Training

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Mrs Clare Whelan, Clinical Skills Tutor in the School of Medicine, to deliver a presentation on her project. She advised that other schools were involved in the project including Dental Science, and Linguistics, Speech and Communications Sciences.

She brought the meeting through the project goals and deliverables, which were to:

- Explore healthcare students' and clinical teachers' perspectives on effective teaching and learning in the clinical environment.

- Identify barriers and enablers for effective teaching and learning in the clinical environment.
- Develop an open access digital teaching and learning module for clinical teachers.

The project and its outputs were commended. Responding to a comment about the difficulty in promoting training for clinical staff who undertake teaching or supervision, Mrs Whelan explained that the module would not carry ECTS credits but that CPD (continuing professional development) points are being discussed with CORU and the Medical Council.

A general discussion followed about the ways in which teaching staff might be encouraged to improve their teaching performance. The merits of peer evaluation were discussed but it was noted that this relies on strong levels of trust between the staff members involved. It was commented that teaching is not considered as prestigious as research in Trinity and, therefore, it will remain difficult to encourage activities in this regard. It was suggested by another member that a simple recognition system operated at a local level, which could feed into promotion opportunities or towards a Provost's Teaching Award, might help. The importance of teaching students was emphasised, since a university cannot operate without this key function. It was noted that it is very difficult for clinical staff to find time to concentrate on developing their teaching skills in addition to carrying out their clinical duties and undertaking research.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Mrs Whelan for presenting information on her project and noted the interesting discussion that it instigated. He thanked members for their contributions and confirmed that he would provide this feedback to the Provost and Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer.

Mrs Clare Whelan withdrew from the meeting.

USC/21-22/076 Any other business

- i. The ADUSE commented on the very tight timeline in which reassessment results must be processed before the start of the teaching year. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate confirmed that he would look at the schedule for reassessments with the Academic Registry.
- ii. The expected delay to the Leaving Certificate results was raised again. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that it is very difficult to plan while there has been no formal announcement. He noted that this was discussed recently with Heads of Schools who indicated a general preference for a unified start date, even though this would have implications for the rest of the academic year. It was commented that the significant impact on staff was not mentioned in the recent letter from the Irish Universities' Association to the Minister for Education, but perhaps this was a strategic decision to ensure the focus of the letter was on the consequences for students.
- iii. A member requested advice in relation to how teaching should be delivered next year, whether this should be in-person or delivered under a hybrid model. She noted that attendance during the current academic year had suffered significantly due to lectures being made available online. The Senior Lecturer noted that low attendance is a concern and that there are difficulties with current procedures. It was noted that the Edmund Burke and Goldsmith Hall lecture theatres have a Bluetooth based system to monitor attendance. The Student Representative commented that students want to attend lectures but they are prioritising the completion of coursework, the volume of which has increased over the last few years.
- iv. A member requested advice in relation to the use of negative marking for multiple choice question examinations. It was noted that this form of assessment is used in

some schools more than others, and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited the member to contact him about this query.

- v. A member queried if an e-mail had been sent to staff and students on measures for the assessment period, as discussed at the last meeting (USC/21-22/061). The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the communication was sent to students and apologised if staff had not received it. He advised that he would query this with Assess, Progress and Graduation (APG) in the Academic Registry.
- vi. A member requested an update from the Working Group on Online Module Enrolment. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that he would request this.
- vii. A member raised the issue of late online module enrolment, after the reassessment session, for students who study abroad in the Junior Sophister year. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the Director of the Academic Registry had responded to this specific query. He noted, however, that the Online Module Enrolment Working Group and Development Group are looking at solutions for this issue.
- viii. A member highlighted the issue of students who go out on Erasmus for their second semester, ahead of receiving their Semester 1 assessment results. It must be made clear to such students that they may be required to undertake reassessments in the event of failing modules from the first semester. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited the member to contact the Global Relations Office to discuss measures which need to be put in place in this regard.
- ix. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted items under Section C of the agenda. He asked members to note the meeting dates for 2022/23 and to complete the USC self-evaluation for 2021/22. Noting the memorandum on additional degree programme destinations for the International Foundation Programme, he advised that this foundation programme would undergo an academic review in the coming year.
- x. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their contribution to USC during 2021/22, particularly outgoing members. He also offered his particular thanks to Ms Sorcha De Brunner and Ms Ciara Conlon for their support of the committee during the year.

USC/21-22/077 Minutes (Section B)

USC noted and approved the following set of minutes.

- i. **MIE Associated College Degrees Committee**
Draft minutes of the meeting of 28 April 2022.
- ii. **RIAM Associated College Degrees Committee**
Draft minutes of the meeting of 11 May 2022

USC/21-22/078 For information (Section C)

USC noted and approved, where relevant, the following items.

- i. **USC Dates for 2022/23**
Memorandum from Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs, dated 11 May 2022.
- ii. **USC Self Evaluation for 2021/22**
Memorandum from Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs, dated 11 May 2022.
- iii. **New FET Route to Integrated Computer Science (TR033)**
Memorandum from Ms Catherine O'Brien, Further Education and Training Project Officer, dated 9 May 2022.

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- iv. **Approval of Additional Degree Destinations and Changes to Progression Requirements for the Trinity International Foundation Programme**
Memorandum from Ms Cliodhna Martin, Admissions and Recruitment Manager, International Foundation Programme, dated 26 April 2022.
- v. **Additional Open Modules for 2022/23**
Memorandum from the Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee dated 11 May 2022.
- vi. **Sub-committee on Micro-credentials, Terms of Reference and Membership update**
Memorandum from Professor Owen Conlan, Chair, dated 9 May 2022.