Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 05 December 2022 at 2.00 pm.

Present: Professor David Shepherd, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Professor Catherine McCabe, Dean of Students
Professor Stephen Smith, Senior Tutor
Professor Fraser Mitchell, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE)
Professor Graeme Murdock, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA)
Professor Miranda Fay Thomas, School of Creative Arts
Professor Ann Devitt, School of Education
Professor Mark Sweetnam, School of English
Professor Robert Armstrong, School of Histories and Humanities
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 Aileen Lynch, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
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 Matthew Saunders, School of Natural Sciences
Professor David O'Regan, School of Physics
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent
Ms Zöe Cummins, Education Officer, Students' Union
Mr Yannick Gloster, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Catherine Welch, Trinity Business School; Professor David Kenny, School of Law; Professor Jacob Erickson, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies; Professor Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science; Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine; Professor Goetz Botterweck, School of Computer Science and Statistics.

In attendance: Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director of the Academic Registry (for item USC/22-23/035); Mr Ronan Hodson, Admissions Officer (for item USC/22-23/039); Dr Maeve O'Dwyer and Mr Joseph Lanzillotta, Tangent (for item USC/22-23/040); Professor Jane Stout, Vice President for Biodiversity and Climate Action (for item USC/22-23/042).

USC/22-23/034   Minutes of the meeting of 08 November 2022
The minutes of the meeting of 08 November 2022 were approved.

USC/22-23/035   Matters arising

i. **USC/22-23/027** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the External Examiner workload distribution model was approved by Council.

ii. **USC/22-23/033** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the change of title to English Studies (TJH and NMS) was approved by Council.

iii. **USC/22-23/026** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies requested the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA) provide an update from the Trinity Electives sub-committee (TESC) and Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee (UCAGC). The ADUCA confirmed that TESC had agreed to drop the algorithm used to allocate Trinity Electives and that UCAGC had agreed that NMS will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that a document prepared by the OME Development Group was circulated, as requested by USC members. He welcomed Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director of the Academic Registry to the meeting, who spoke to the circulated document. The Director of the Academic Registry explained that the document was developed during the OME process in 2021/22 with input from a number of stakeholders, including DUTLs, the OME Working Group and programme office and School managers, and gave an overview of issues that affect Schools as well as possible solutions. She advised that the document provided an overview of issues that affect Schools and set out possible solutions, and that an invite to a meeting to discuss this in detail will be issued to USC members. The meeting will be recorded for the benefit of those who cannot attend.

Members welcomed the opportunity for further discussion. In response to a query, the Director of the Academic Registry stated that it is hoped possible solutions are implemented in the current academic year. She requested that members send details of any additional items for discussion to the Change and Transformation Project Lead, Mr Dermot Cronin, in advance of the meeting. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Director of the Academic Registry for the update.

USC/22-23/036   Senior Lecturer's Updates

i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies drew members' attention to the reminder on the importance of safeguarding academic integrity that was issued to students ahead of the upcoming examination session. He provided an update on the work of the Academic Integrity Working Group (AIWG), explaining that the subgroups have been slightly restructured, with one subgroup focused on prevention and another to responding to academic misconduct. He thanked members for their feedback on the list of types of academic misconduct in the last USC meeting, confirming that this was taken on board and a list will be compiled and discussed at Graduate Studies Committee. He explained that the AIWG will commence a number of activities in Semester 2 of 2022/23, including the administration of a survey.

In response to a query from the Academic Secretary, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that an application for funding was submitted in response to a call from the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). He explained that, if successful, the AIWP intends to utilize the McCabe-ICAI Academic Integrity Surveys (AIS) developed by the International Centre for Academic Integrity, which is currently being examined to identify any areas which

may require amendments to apply in the Irish Higher Education context, although these will be limited to ensure benchmarking is possible.

ii.   The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, speaking on the topic of assessments, emphasised the importance of issuing clear protocols and guidelines to students, and requested that this advice is passed on to colleagues in their respective Schools. He referred specifically to online exams, stating that clear guidelines should be issued to students regarding submission processes in the event of technical difficulties and the permitted materials students can access. He reminded the meeting that online exams should be treated as open book exams, and that the process with respect to students who are prevented from sitting an exam (or any part thereof) due to illness applies to online and in person exams equally. He recognised that it may be necessary to develop guidelines on this.

The Senior Tutor highlighted the difficulty in determining acceptable proof of COVID-19, as testing facilities which provide a certified result are no longer widely available. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that currently COVID-19 has been treated as any other instance of ill health in that a medical certificate is required, however, he invited the Senior Tutor to contact him to discuss further. A member suggested that commercial testing facilities, which provide certified results are available and could be utilized by students. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the member for the suggestion and stated that further guidance will be issued if necessary.

iii.   The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies provided an update on the undergraduate regulations group, stating that the group has identified the need to examine regulations in relation to off-books, with a focus on improving access to services for students who are off-books.

iv.   The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that he will meet with Faculty Deans to discuss the review of both the Foundation Scholarship and the International Foundation Programme.

USC/22-23/037   Trinity Electives Annual Report 2021/22

A memorandum from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA), dated 28 November 2022, was circulated with the enclosed report.

The ADUCA brought the meeting through key areas of the report, noting the tremendous contribution of the former ADUSE, Professor Áine Kelly, who was Chair of TESC until the academic year 2022/23. He stated that Trinity Electives have embedded successfully in the undergraduate curriculum, providing students with a suite of interdisciplinary modules outside their core programmes. He highlighted that the vast majority of students are allocated their first or second preference TE. He went on to state that TEs provide teaching staff with the opportunity to showcase their research activities and those involved in the delivery of TEs exhibit a high level of commitment and enthusiasm.

The ADUCA advised that in 2021/22, four additional modules were approved for delivery in 2022/23, one of which was developed in conjunction with a Trinity Linked Provider, the Royal Academy of Music (RIAM). He stated that the TESC is currently working to address any issues that were highlighted in the 2021/22 report, such as disparities in assessment results and student feedback.

In response to a query, the ADUCA stated that caution is required when interpreting the data on TE capacity; as while it may seem that take up of particular modules was low, this may be due to a large number of student places offered in that module. A member raised

concerns about the minimum capacity on some modules, remarking on the resource implications for running a module with small student numbers, to which the ADUCA responded that capacities are not enforced by the TESC but rather decided by module co-ordinators.

In response to a query on student flow across faculties, the ADUCA stated that one of the functions of the algorithm that allocated TEs, which will not be utilized in 2023/24, was to ensure an interdisciplinary balance of students on TEs. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies remarked that this will need to be monitored going forward.

The Academic Secretary noted that the student evaluation report indicated that students perceived that the workload of TEs was low, to which the ADUCA responded that the TESC intends to explore this this further. He also highlighted that module coordinators also conduct evaluations of their TEs and that this may provide additional information.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the ADUCA, noting that the recent institutional review commended the transformative changes brought about by TEP, including TEs, the value of which is further illustrated by partnerships with NCAD and RIAM to deliver TEs.

USC/22-23/038 Trinity Elective Proposal

XX

A memorandum from the ADUCA, dated 28 November 2022, was circulated with the appended proposal. The ADUCA, as chair of the Trinity Elective sub-committee, spoke to the proposal.

The ADUCA explained that the proposal entitled 'Defence from the Dark Arts: Science and other tools for critical thinking', which will be hosted by the School of Natural Science, was recommended to USC for approval by TESC. He stated that there was an extremely positive response to the proposal from committee members, who felt it would be a very attractive offering for students due to the popularity of similar offerings.

Action/Decision
038.1 USC supported the Trinity Elective proposal 'Defence from the Dark Arts: Science and other tools for critical thinking' for delivery in 2022/23.

USC/22-23/039 Revisions to the Duolingo English Test Score Requirements

XX

A memorandum from the Admissions Officer and the Head of the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, dated 29 November 2022, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed the Admissions Officer to the meeting.

Speaking to the item, the Admissions Officer stated that Duolingo test scores are calibrated with International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores, with a score of 110 being equivalent to IELTS 6.5. He explained recently published changes have advised a recalibration, with 6.5 IELTS now equivalent to a Duolingo score of 120. He explained that Professor Lorna Carson has engaged with the Head of Assessment in Duolingo on the matter. The Admissions Officer proposed that this is implemented immediately, although pointed out that there may be some inconsistency as some students have already submitted applications for the next academic year.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged that it is regrettable that there will be disparity, however, he agreed that this should be implemented as soon as possible.

Action/Decision

039.01 USC supported the revision to the Duolingo test score requirements, including sub-scores. A Duolingo score of 120 will now be equivalent to IELTS 6.5 for 2022/23 admissions, with immediate effect.

USC/22-23/040 Tangent Initiatives

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Dr Maeve O'Dwyer and Mr Joseph Lanzillotta to the meeting, who were invited to showcase activities available to undergraduate students in Tangent.

Dr O'Dwyer and Mr Lanzillotta spoke to the item by way of a presentation. Dr O'Dwyer took the meeting through the activities of Tangent, highlighting the transferable skills students can gain through participation in the UG Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship (10 ECTS), such as innovative thinking, leadership, and communication skills. She explained that it is an NFQ Level 7 certificate which students take alongside their primary degree, which is fully funded. She noted that applications from students from the AHSS faculty are low, and Tangent is focused on increasing applications from this cohort. Mr Lanzillotta drew members attention to the LaunchBox, Tangent's Student Accelerator, which is a summer programme that grants student entrepreneurs with funding and access to networks of investors and mentors to progress their idea. He noted that applications are open until the middle of February 2023 and hoped students would be encouraged to apply. Mr Lanzillotta also highlighted the work of the open incubator, which seeks to make innovation programmes more accessible to students. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Dr O'Dwyer and Mr Lanzillotta and invited questions or comments from members.

In response to a comment from the Dean of Students, Dr O'Dwyer agreed that a new approach to recruiting students from the faculty of AHSS is needed and stated outreach activities such as taster events could be arranged. The Dean of Students indicated that she would be willing to help facilitate this.

In response to a query from a member, Dr O'Dwyer informed the meeting that there is capacity for 100 students on the certificate, however, there is an attrition issue and currently 77 students remain out of the 100 students that initially enrolled. She stated that further impact assessment is planned on employability skills gained by students, and that they are working with Careers and external companies to arrange internships for students.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged that the certificate adds enormous value to student's experience, however, he expressed concern on the additional workload for students, which may be a barrier to participation in the programme. The Education Officer and the Student Representative, who both completed the programme, agreed that the assessment workload was difficult to manage on top of their own programme of study and that they prioritised the work of their degree programmes over the work of the certificate. Dr O'Dwyer responded by stating that they are mindful of this and strive to schedule coursework carefully, however, she acknowledged that expectations need to be further clarified for students.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies wrapped up the item, thanking Dr O'Dwyer and Mr Lanzillotta for their presentation and stating that further conversation with the Tangent Director may be helpful.

USC/22-23/041   Inclusive Curriculum

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies introduced the item by referring to the previous discussion on Inclusive Curriculum at USC in October 2022 and stated that Dr Rachel Hoare expressed her gratitude for members feedback following the meeting. He explained that what emerged from that discussion was that concrete suggestions on how to implement inclusivity in teaching practices would be helpful. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of

Undergraduate Studies explained that Dr Hoare could not attend today, however she submitted a short video from Trinity- INC on using [Blackboard Ally](#).

After viewing the video, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited members to discuss their experience of using Blackboard Ally. Some members indicated that they have used it, but frequently encounter difficulties in producing accessible content. A member pointed out that it is more efficient to ensure accessibility is built into the initial design of teaching materials, and another member highlighted accessibility checker tools, such as [Accessibility Checker Microsoft 365](#) can make the process easier. Members pointed out that there is currently a lack of clarity regarding what is expected from teaching staff.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed that teaching staff may require further guidance and added that he will work with Dr Hoare in making resources available to teaching staff.

USC/22-23/042   Sustainability and the Climate Crisis

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed the Vice President for Biodiversity and Climate Action, Professor Jane Stout, to the meeting.

The Vice President for Biodiversity and Climate Action thanked USC for the opportunity to discuss issues of sustainability and spoke to the item by way of a presentation. She stated that the concept of sustainability is much broader than the environment and highlighted the need for an intersectional approach to tackling the climate crises, with social, environmental, and economic processes all needing appropriate attention. She brought the meeting through the sustainability strategy and action plan, linking it to Trinity's strategic plan, emphasising the importance of structurally embedding sustainability practices within all activities on campus. She outlined the approaches and examples of good practice in other universities, stressing the need for capacity training and support for teaching staff for successful implementation.

The Vice President for Biodiversity and Climate Action advised the meeting that a [review](#) of the Trinity undergraduate curriculum found that out of more than 1,500 modules delivered to undergraduate students, 92 of them addressed aspects of the climate and biodiversity crises. Furthermore, she noted, the majority of these are limited to students enrolled on specific programmes. She presented some suggestions for core goals and visions for how sustainability can be embedded into Trinity's undergraduate curriculum, underlining the need for a lifelong learning approach. She requested that DUTLs meet with teaching colleagues or programme directors to consider the following questions:

1. Can you include a 5-credit module on your programme? (Discipline-specific/Open module/Trinity Elective)
2. In which year and semester?
3. Would you prefer a discipline-specific module or a generalist one?
4. What are the challenges to doing this?

In the discussion that followed, the following points were made:
- Members highlighted the need for dedicated resources and training for teaching staff to ensure a rigorous approach and successful implementation.
- Members discussed the merits of a discipline -specific or transdisciplinary approach, with differing opinions on which would be most effective.
- One member indicated the potential of harnessing student knowledge and innovation on the topic.
- Members cautioned against tokenistic gestures and stressed the importance of a meaningful approach, with some questioning if a 5 ECTS module is sufficient.

- One member pointed out that modules may cover content related to sustainability, however, it is not explicitly stated in the module descriptor and may have been missed in the audit.
- A member highlighted that the Trinity graduate attributes are an appropriate space for embedding sustainability values at the university level.
- A member pointed out that the goals can be divided, with some goals aimed at urgently addressing the climate crisis and others with a more long-term focus on shaping behaviour and attitudes.

The Vice President for Biodiversity and Climate Action thanked members for their contributions and advised that that a survey will be circulated in the near future, and that members can contact vpbca@tcd.ie or sustainability@tcd.ie with any further feedback in the meantime.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Vice President for Biodiversity and Climate Action for her presentation and members for their contributions, stating that there will be future opportunities for further input on the matter.

USC/22-23/042   Any other business
    i.   The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their contributions over the semester and advised that USC meetings held on 21 February 2023 and 23 May 2023 will be held in-person.

USC/22-23/043   Minutes (Section B)
USC noted and approved, where necessary, the following set of minutes:

    i.   **MIE Associated College Degrees Committee**
    Minutes of the meeting of 17 November 2022

    ii.   **Trinity Electives Sub Committee**
    Draft minutes of the meeting of 09 November 2022.

    iii.   **Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee**
    Minutes of the meeting of 18 October 2022

USC/22-23/044   Items for noting (Section C)
None