



**A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 17 January 2023 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 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 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, Theology, and Peace Studies  
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 Goetz Botterweck, 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 Matthew Saunders, 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 Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent  
Ms Zöe Cummins, Education Officer, Students’ Union

Apologies: Professor Catherine Welch, Trinity Business School  
Professor Miranda Fay Thomas, School of Creative Arts  
Professor David Kenny, School of Law  
Professor Iouri Gounko, School of Chemistry  
Mr Yannick Gloster, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary:  
Academic Affairs; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Breda Walls, Director of  
Student Services; Dr Pauline Rooney, Director of Academic Practice.

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**USC/22-23/045 Minutes of the meeting of 05 December 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of 05 December 2022 were approved.

**USC/22-23/046 Matters arising**

None

## **USC/22-23/047 Senior Lecturer's Updates**

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies referred to the undergraduate regulations group, advising that an initial meeting was held in December 2022. He stated the group are focusing on examining regulations in relation to off-books.
- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies provided an update on the Sustainability in UG Education (SUGE) Working Group, which will consider options on how to embed sustainability in the undergraduate curriculum. The WG will be chaired jointly by the Vice-President for Biodiversity & Climate Action and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and will include the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE) and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA), a number of DUTLs, the SU Education Officer and the Head of Academic Practice.
- iii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted that work has progressed on setting up a working group to review the External Examiner Policy and practice, which will convene in the near future.
- iv. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies drew members' attention to a couple of matters relating to academic integrity. Firstly, he advised members that correspondence went out to affected Schools in relation to a possible infringement of copyright of Trinity teaching materials by the website studocu.com. He informed members that a new administrative officer post has been created to provide support to the ongoing work on academic integrity, and this post will be based in Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies notified USC that the application to Quality and Qualifications Ireland for funding has been successful. This will be used to conduct research to determine the challenges and benefits of utilizing the McCabe-ICAI Surveys in the Irish context to assess faculty and students' knowledge and beliefs about academic integrity. It is hoped that this research by Trinity will facilitate the higher education sector in Ireland in developing a national survey. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies will be meeting with representatives from the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) to discuss the use of their surveys here at Trinity and the research project more generally.

## **USC/22-23/048 Inclusive Curriculum**

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies introduced the item by referring to the previous discussion on Inclusive Curriculum at USC in Michaelmas Term, stating that Trinity-INC is developing a guide to Blackboard Ally, which, when completed, will be circulated to members. Dr Rachel Hoare has provided a video which provides information on how to make [Blackboard Modules clearer for students](#), which was played for members.

In the discussion that followed, it was suggested that templates would encourage consistency. Members highlighted issues that have arisen due to recent updates to Blackboard, and it was noted that IT Services issued [guidance](#) on these changes subsequent to the implementation. It was pointed out that timely engagement with the teaching community would be more beneficial. Questions were raised regarding Blackboard, with one member pointing out that other more affordable and equally functional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platforms are available. The Head of Academic Practice stated that templates can be created, however, this function may not be facilitated in Trinity. She advised that a review of Trinity's choice of VLE will be carried out in the near future, and the issues raised should be further examined.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the video is available on YouTube and asked members to circulate to appropriate colleagues in their Schools. He

requested that members contact him with any issues and advised that he is happy to take these up with IT Services if necessary.

#### **USC/22-23/049 Effective Teaching Practices**

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited Professor Jacob Erickson, from the School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies, to speak to this item.

Professor Erickson brought the meeting through one example of an interactive and experiential teaching approach, involving students discussing topics covered in the module in relation to selected artworks in the National Gallery of Ireland, which has had additional benefits such as increasing knowledge of civic spaces and development of public speaking skills. He explained that student-led learning has resulted in a high level of engagement and attendance, which carried through to a high standard of assessments.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Professor Jacob Erickson and invited Professor Goetz Botterweck, School of Computer Science and Statistics, to present on the types of effective teaching practices being deployed in his school. Professor Botterweck highlighted the benefits and challenges of various teaching strategies employed in his School, such as the annotation of slides during lectures using a tablet, interactive systems facilitating direct student responses, flipped classroom approaches and online assessments.

In the discussion that followed, members discussed the merits and drawbacks of flipped classroom approaches, with some members pointing out that student feedback has indicated pre-recorded lectures increased contact hours and some students lacked the motivation to watch them. In concluding the discussion, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged that, while this approach can sometimes be effective, in-person lectures do often encourage student interaction and engagement.

#### **USC/22-23/050 Academic Integrity: Artificial Intelligence and Assessment**

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited Professor Kevin Kelly from the School of Engineering to speak on this item.

Professor Kelly spoke to the item by way of a presentation, highlighting the development of freely available, sophisticated tools which can generate text that can go undetected by plagiarism software. He demonstrated examples of this type of plagiarism across a broad range of disciplines and offered some short-term, medium term, and long-term solutions to combat academic misconduct arising from the use of this technology. Professor Kelly outlined how to carry out a risk audit, stating this could start conversations within schools.

A discussion ensued on the approach the university should take, with some members stating that attention could be directed to harnessing this technology and incorporating it into assessments. The meeting agreed that this would represent a seismic shift in how assessment is carried out. A member stressed the need for a critical response to AI tools, pointing to the ethical concerns regarding the motives for creating these AI tools.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that this issue raises serious questions as to how we safeguard the integrity of our assessment and urged DUTLs to continue to raise awareness of these issues in their respective Schools.

#### **USC/22-23/051 Admissions Strategy**

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 13 January 2023, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that this is a current key strategic conversation, and asked DUTLs to consider the three questions posed in his memorandum regarding: 1) the benefits, risks, and limitations of further

internationalization, 2) providing teaching in other locations or increasing virtual delivery and 3) teaching a higher proportion of postgraduate or micro-credentials.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were made:

- Consideration must be given to the quality of the student experience, and the strategy must account for external factors, such as difficulty in securing accommodation.
- Further internationalization could increase the workload on Schools as international students have diverse needs and expectations.
- Funding structures need to be factored into the development of a strategy, as government financial incentives are targeted at some disciplines but not others.
- Strategy and forethought are needed to ensure true diversity is achieved; large cohorts from a small number of countries would not be balanced.
- Higher numbers of international students have a specific impact on disciplines that offer integrated UG/PG programmes and base their budget model on students completing all five years of the programme as international students do not always progress to the final postgraduate year.
- Remote delivery may result in lower student engagement and does not facilitate a sense of community, which can dilute the distinctive Trinity identity. Furthermore, the historical campus is a cornerstone of a Trinity Education and crucial to the student experience.
- Programmes being delivered entirely online can be successful however, it is a separate experience from in-person delivery.
- Remote delivery may result in putting Trinity in direct competition with international universities, which may be better resourced.
- Blended teaching of UG and PG students can enrich the teaching and learning process, however, balance is needed to ensure appropriate level of teaching for both cohorts.
- Sufficient teaching staff is needed to meet demand.
- Increased PG numbers would foster stronger research.

Concluding the discussion, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the meeting for their contributions, noting that School-level granularity is essential. He advised that there will be further opportunities to contribute to this conversation and requested that DUTLs submit written responses to these questions.

#### **USC/22-23/052 Any Other Business**

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the USC meeting held on 21 February 2023 will be held in-person in the TBS Boardroom.
- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted the upcoming quality review of Academic Affairs and asked DUTLs to encourage any colleagues who have submitted UG course proposals to participate in the meetings.

#### **USC/22-23/053 Minutes (Section B)**

USC noted and approved, where necessary, the following set of minutes:

- i. **Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee**  
Minutes of the meeting of 15 November 2022

#### **USC/22-23/054 Items for Noting (Section C)**

None