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

XX = Item is of significance to Council

A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 21 February 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 Catherine Welch, Trinity Business School
Professor Miranda Fay Thomas, School of Creative Arts
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 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 John Stalker, School of Mathematics
Professor David O'Regan, School of Physics
Professor Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent
Mr Yannick Gloster, Student Representative

Apologies:
Professor Matthew Saunders, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Juan Pablo Labrador, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Dr Pauline Rooney, Director of Academic Practice.
Ms Zöe Cummins, Education Officer, Students' Union
Professor Ann Devitt, School of Education
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services.

In attendance:
Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary: Academic Affairs; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative.

USC/22-23/055   Minutes of the meeting of 17 January 2023
The minutes of the meeting of 17 January 2023 were approved.

USC/22-23/056   Matters arising

i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their contributions on the Admissions Strategy, advising that these are now being considered by the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer.

USC/22-23/057   Senior Lecturer's Updates

i.   The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke to the review of External Examiners policy and practice, advising that meetings of the working group are scheduled in the coming weeks and that attendance will be one issue that will be examined. He asked members to contact him if there is a request for the remote attendance of External Examiners.

ii.   The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the Sustainability in UG Education (SUGE) Working Group has been considering how to embed sustainability in the undergraduate curriculum, stating that progress has been made and that it is an opportunity to do something to empower students which will be beneficial to wider society.

iii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted the recent communication on Academic Integrity, which provided guidance to teaching staff on both short-term and medium-term adjustments to assessments. He stated while it is not normally advisable to make changes to assessment modalities at the beginning of the semester, this was warranted (if communicated clearly to students) due to the current risk posed by evolving technology of AI-text generators. However, he highlighted that the deadline for making changes to the Sem 2 examination timetable has now passed.

It was pointed out by members that while the current plagiarism policy is robust, it may not be fit for purpose in the current context due to the difficulties in detecting AI generated work. A member highlighted that a recent School wide audit of assessment modalities revealed a high level of vulnerability to academic misconduct, stating that any assessment that is not invigilated is at risk. A member suggested that it would be helpful to define what is considered substantial proof of plagiarism in the current context and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that he will bring this point to the attention of the Dean of Graduate Studies, who is Chair of the relevant Academic Integrity sub- group. He noted that some programmes have raised the introduction of short oral examinations and members spoke in favour of this, stating that this would help identify discrepancies between the assessment and the knowledge of the student and could be easily implemented. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that any such plans should be run by him if they are to be introduced at this stage in the teaching term. He also pointed out that Academic Practice and the Student Learning team are examining ways to support students in navigating Academic Integrity, and that this will be considered by the 'Promoting Academic Integrity' sub-group. A member highlighted the role that teaching staff must play in guiding students in how to positively use evolving technologies, stating that technological advances have posed challenges to academic integrity in the past, and that AI text generators may be used widely in the future. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their constructive input on the topic.

iv.   The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted a recent communication on the academic year 2023/24 start date, which confirmed that the delay in the release of Leaving Certificate results will again have implications for the start of the academic year. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their feedback and stated that either he or the Vice Provost/Chief Academic Officer will be in touch in due course on the matter. In response to a query, he stated that this may be an ongoing issue and that he recognises that there is a desire to re-think how the academic year is structured to lessen the impact on students.

v.   The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke on the topic of the procedures for the non-submission of coursework and absence from examinations, noting that this policy was approved in 2019/20 and put on pause during COVID. He stated that it had been highlighted to USC on two previous occasions that this would be implemented in

2022/23 and has been integrated into the Calendar, with two reminders issued to students. He acknowledged that there may be uncertainty due to the removal of mitigating measures implemented on regulations during COVID. He stated that the implementation of the policy will be monitored carefully and reviewed, if necessary. In the discussion that followed members made the following points:

- Members felt it would be more prudent to review the policy before it is implemented to avoid any difficulties.
- It was noted that administrative staff in some Schools have voiced strong concern on the systematic limitations of applying the policy, particularly in relation to the capping of marks and will introduce the possibility of human error.
- Members expressed uncertainty on how the policy can be operationalised, particularly in an already tight timeline for marking assessments.
- It was suggested that SITS could be configured to flag to students that they will be subject to capping.
- A member stated that the policy doesn't fit with assessment modalities in their Schools and will prove difficult to implement.
- There is a lack of awareness in the student body, with members noting concerns on the notice of implementation and the fact that the policy is externally referenced in the Calendar.
- One member noted that the policy was not integrated into their School handbook, and while this was an error on the part of the School, it will prove difficult to defend against any student appeals that may result.
- One member stated that the procedures were unnecessarily punitive, particularly the capping of marks.
- A number of members highlighted that Schools have expressed concern regarding the processing of medical certificates.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the policy had been brought to USC previously and queried why these concerns were not raised previously, to which members responded that the systematic limitations in implementing the policy have only become clear more recently. The Senior Lecturer thanked members for their input and acknowledged the concerns raised and stated that he would be happy to discuss with Academic Registry regarding any possible changes to SITS that could accommodate the implementation of the policy.

USC/22-23/058 **Trinity Elective Proposals**

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A memorandum from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA), dated 13 February 2023, was circulated.

The ADUCA stated that all three proposals have been approved by the Schools involved and by the Trinity Electives sub-committee and that any suggested amendments have been integrated. Speaking to the proposals, the ADUCA provided information about the three modules. The first, 'Inequality in the 21st Century', has been put forward by the School of Social Science and Philosophy and the module co-ordinators are Dr Yekaterina Chzhen and Professor Richard Layte. The second, 'Identities and Ecologies of Latin America and the Caribbean: Past, Present and Future', is being proposed by the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies and co-ordinated by Dr Yairen Jerez Columbié and Dr Diogo de Carvalho Cabral. The third proposal, from the School of Histories and Humanities, is entitled 'Ages of Empire' and has been developed by Dr Robert Armstrong and Dr Graeme Murdock. The ADUCA requested that the USC support the proposals, stating that they provide students with diverse subjects and fill important gaps in the suite of Trinity Electives.

Action/Decision
058.01: USC supported the three Trinity Elective proposals 'Inequality in the 21st Century', 'Identities and Ecologies of Latin America and the Caribbean: Past, Present and Future' and 'Ages of Empire' for delivery in 2023/24.

USC/22-23/059 Academic Registry Annual Report 2021/22

The Academic Registry Annual Report 2021/22, dated December 2022, 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 2021/22 – at a glance (figures related to the student lifecycle)
- 2021/22 Overall Student Body
- Applications and Admissions
- Student Finance
- Student Case Management
- Examinations

The Director of the Academic Registry highlighted the increase in direct applications, stating that 2021/22 had the highest number of registered students in the history of Trinity, with the undergraduate population accounting for 70% of all registered students. She noted the increase in applications to Trinity Joint Honours (TJH). She highlighted new activities taking place in the Academic Registry (AR), including the creation of Faculty Liaison Officers and the first Council approved hybrid exam session.

In the discussion that followed, a member requested that students are given more timely notice on the scheduling of graduations, and the Director of the Academic Registry agreed to look into this. A member noted the growth in student numbers and queried if resourcing of the AR has reflected this growth. The Director of the Academic Registry stated that additional activities taken on by AR, such as OME, have been supported with additional resources, however they are struggling to manage the additional workload that comes with a growth in student numbers. She stated that AR are striving to streamline processes to mitigate the impact of the additional workload, and are putting together business cases for additional resourcing. The meeting noted the high quality of the work of AR with limited resources.

In response to a query, the Director of the Academic Registry stated that student cases seem to have decreased slightly in Semester 1 this academic year, possibly due to the strong communication that the mitigating measures that were implemented during COVID are no longer in place, and it is hoped they will continue to decrease.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noting the pattern of growth, stated that this highlights the need to be intentional in shaping the student body. He thanked the Director of the Academic Registry for attending the meeting and for her presentation.

USC/22-23/060 Inclusive Curriculum

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Dr Rachel Hoare, the Academic Project Director of Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project – Trinity-INC, to the meeting.

Dr Hoare spoke to the item by way of a presentation and provided an update on the Trinity-INC project. She highlighted that while it will end at the end of this academic year, it is hoped that good practice continues to be embedded in existing teaching and learning structures. She brought the meeting through the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Engagement, Representation and Action and Expression. She advocated the 'Plus One' approach which advocates for teaching staff to change one thing each year, to build up good practice. She highlighted the Trinity-INC Professional Learning Module in Inclusive Practices for Teaching and Learning, which is starting on the 22 February 2023, and will be delivered again in the summer months. She asked members to advertise this in their respective Schools. Dr Hoare also advised members to consult with their relevant School Champions, who can advise on funding available to Schools to implement changes.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies asked DUTLs to share any examples of progress made in their Schools with regards to inclusive curriculum. A member highlighted a mapping of assessment modalities exercise that has taken place in the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences to ensure a diverse range of modalities is offered. Another member reported that the School of Engineering are endeavouring to provide teaching material in a variety of formats and making recorded lecturers available, however he noted that lecture recordings are only made available upon request to prevent a decrease in attendance and student interaction. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the School of Education have developed a [self reflection tool](#) as part of an Erasmus+ project that may be useful for all teaching staff. It was highlighted that there are some systematic limitations in implementing UDL based assessments and that it was more vulnerable to academic misconduct.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Dr Rachel Hoare for attending the meeting and for her presentation.

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Trinity Reasonable Accommodation Policy

A memorandum from the Director of Trinity Disability Service, dated 13 February 2023, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Mr Declan Treanor, the Director of Trinity Disability Service, to the meeting.

The Director of Trinity Disability Service spoke to the meeting by way of a presentation. He advised that the policy was reviewed after extensive consultation with relevant parties across college. He explained that the proposed changes are minor, and an appendix has been added with guidelines for students and staff on the modification of examinations and assessment arrangement for students with disabilities. He advised that the number of students with disabilities enrolled in Trinity is increasing annually, and that the Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022–2028 aims to increase the number of new entrants with disabilities to 16% by 2028. He stated that while the policy is robust, there are barriers to the full implementation of the policy, particularly in relation to teaching staff accessing the Learning Educational Needs Summary (LENS) for students. He also highlighted the responsibility of students to effectively communicate their needs to teaching staff. Concluding his presentation, the Director of the Disability Service asked the meeting to approve the proposed changes and requested that members consider how to fully implement the policy and ensure students receive accommodations where necessary.

Following the presentation, a member noted that currently there are no accommodations available to support students taking exams in foreign languages. A discussion ensued on how LENS can be communicated to all relevant teaching staff and some members referred to the practice in their respective schools, explaining that module co-ordinators are reminded to check the LENS on SITS and to ensure all teaching staff on the module are fully informed of accommodations required. In response to a query, the Director of Trinity Disability Service explained that several people in Schools can access the LENS on SITS, including those providing administrative support for assessments and assigned module co-ordinators. He advised that the Disability Service will provide guidance on this to Schools. He explained that a SharePoint folder was shared with Schools last year and advised that he will upload guidance on what information should be included in student handbooks via SharePoint.

Concluding the discussion, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Director of the Trinity Disability Service for attending the meeting and for his presentation**.**

Action/Decision
061.01: USC supported the revisions to the Reasonable Accommodation Policy.

USC/22-23/062   Any Other Business

    i.   The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the Director of Student Services provided an update on Online Module Enrolment and that this will be circulated to members.

    ii.   A member highlighted that there was a particularly bad performance in the recent Foundation Scholarship examinations. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that a review of the Foundation Scholarship is currently underway, and data will be made available in due course.

USC/22-23/063   Minutes (Section B)

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

    i.   **RIAM Associated College Degrees Committee**
Minutes of the meeting of 25 October 2022

    ii.   **Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee**
Minutes of the meeting of 06 December 2022

    iii.   **Trinity Electives Sub-Committee**
Minutes of the meeting of 07 February 2023

USC/22-23/064   Items for Noting (Section C)

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

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    i.   **New Combinations for Trinity Joint Honours**
Memorandum from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture, dated 08 February 2023, with supporting documentation outlining two new combinations for TJH:
- English Studies and Middle Eastern, Jewish and Islamic Civilisations
- Drama Studies and Middle Eastern, Jewish and Islamic Civilisations

There are no changes to quota associated with this new combination and all pathways will be available in both subjects.

    ii.   **New Minor Subject Information for 23-24**
Memorandum from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture, dated 8 February 2023, with supporting documentation.

    iii.   **Undergraduate Common Architecture Annual Report 2021-22**

    iv.   **National Student Survey Report 2020/21**
The Dean of Students provided an update on the new process relating to the response of Schools to the survey report, advising that Schools will now address three questions, which will be submitted through the relevant Faculty for the Annual Quality Report. The questions are to be circulated from the Quality Office to Schools:

1. Based on the results of the student survey, identify a maximum of 3 issues that the school will address/improve.
2. Outline how each issue will be addressed
3. Identify barriers to addressing/improving any issue