



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 18 April 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 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 Jacob Erickson, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies
Professor Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
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 Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent
Ms Zöe Cummins, Education Officer, Students' Union
Mr Yannick Gloster, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Dr Pauline Rooney, Director of Academic Practice; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services. Ms Roisin Smith, Quality Officer (for items USC/22-23/076 and USC/22-23/077); Professor Lorna Carson, Head of School, Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences (for item USC/22-23/076).

USC/22-23/071 Minutes of the meeting of 21 March 2023

The minutes of the meeting of 21 March 2023 were approved.

USC/22-23/072 Matters arising

- i. **USC/22-23/069** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the change to the Facilitated Entry Grades: Trinity Access Programme Foundation Courses and TCD Partnership CDET B were approved by Council.

USC/22-23/073 Senior Lecturer's Updates

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke to the topic of Academic Integrity, advising that a meeting was held with IT Services to discuss the newly developed Turnitin Artificial Intelligence detector and it was decided that before the plug-in is activated, its capabilities and limitations would be assessed by IT Services by testing it ourselves and/or learning from the experience of other institutions who have enabled it.

Providing an update on the 'Respond' sub-group chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies, he stated that work is progressing on amending policies and process relating to academic integrity. He advised that at the meeting held on the 12 April 2023, Council noted that the term 'work', as stated in Calendar Part II Section 96 and Part III Section 49, is regarded as all forms of assessed work including continuous assessment and examinations.

He invited the Director of Academic Practice to provide an update on the upcoming events to support academic staff in responding to the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools. The Director of Academic Practice stated that an online event will be held on the 20 April 2023. Further faculty specific [workshops](#) will be held in May, and invites will be issued to the relevant academic staff in leadership in teaching and learning.

- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke to the topic of the ongoing work on embedding sustainability in the undergraduate education, stating that an implementation plan will be finalized by December 2023. The Academic Secretary advised that the Sustainability fellows have now been appointed from each of the three faculties and will be in place until December 2023. The Senior Lecturer stated that they will join the Sustainability in UG Education (SUGE) working group.
- iii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that a survey related to the Faculty Deans review of Scholarship has been distributed and the results will be considered by the Central Scholarship Committee. He reminded USC that this is an operational review, which is separate from the Board approved review of Scholarship, and requested that DUTLs encourage colleagues to complete the survey.
- iv. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the review of the International Foundation Programme is underway, and an item on this will be presented to the next USC meeting.

USC/22-23/074 Senior Lecturer Annual Report

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The Senior Lecturer's Annual Report for 2021/22, dated April 2023, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies brought the meeting through the report by way of a presentation, which covered data in relation to the undergraduate admissions, student lifecycle and post-admissions in 2021/22.

He highlighted the ongoing challenges of recruiting students from Northern Ireland. The DUTL from the School of Medicine highlighted the lack of a mutual recognition agreement (MRA) of human and veterinary medicine qualifications between the EU and the UK, which may be impacting applications.

There was a discussion in relation to the recording of plagiarism cases, and it was noted that level 1 plagiarism is not deemed to be academic misconduct and not recorded in SITS. A member commented on the relevance of student awareness of regulations in adjudicating or mitigating academic misconduct in light of the requirement that students sign a form indicating familiarity with them. Another member pointed out that level 1 plagiarism is not limited to first year students. The Senior Lecturer stated that levels of plagiarism will be reviewed as part of the wider review of plagiarism policies.

A member suggested that the category of EU students should be broken down between students from Ireland and those from other EU countries and the Senior Lecturer agreed it would be useful. He confirmed that UK students are still included in the EU category.

Speaking to the increase in applications to the Academic Appeals Committee, the SU Education Officer stated that this may be due to the short timeline involved in submitting a student case and highlighted that students may not necessarily be aware of the process, which may cause undue stress to students. The Senior Lecturer acknowledged that while policies are brought to student's attention, there may be confusion about the process and that this can be looked at.

Action/Decision

074.01: USC noted the Senior Lecturer's Annual Report and recommended it to Council.

USC/22-23/075 Re-assessment Practices

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 12 April 2023, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer noted that of the approx. 3000 modules labelled as undergraduate modules in SITS, the vast majority reassess by component, as current TEP regulations dictate, however a sizable proportion reassess students on the whole module. He underlined the importance of alignment between reassessment policies and practices as a matter of institutional integrity and the relevance of this for proceeding to implement the procedures on non-submission and nonattendance. He reminded USC that the regulations do allow for different modalities of assessment in the reassessment session but that the current regulations imply that students are required to only be assessed on failed components. He pointed out that the School of Medicine currently have a derogation from this regulation and the DUTL of the School of Medicine confirmed that this was required due to external regulation by the Medical Council and advised that stricter regulations in relation to deferral of studies or reassessment in clinical aspects of the programme are being sought by accrediting bodies.

The Senior Lecturer opened the discussion to USC and the following comments and observations were made:

- Members pointed to the systematic limitations with setting up reassessments by component in SITS and that reassessment sittings were not automatically triggered. It was reported that in some Schools, 100% reassessment exams were set up in SITS for practical reasons, but that Schools then manually recalculated marks based on the weighting of the failed component. It was stressed that it is imperative that the necessary functionalities are made available in SITS in order for regulations to be implemented as intended.
- One member pointed out that many administrative staff in their School are on 9-month contracts, therefore there are restrained resources during the reassessment period. Other members agreed that there is an extra administrative burden of reassessing by component.
- Several members made the point that assessing students in a formative manner lends itself to cumulative learning which can't be separated from the broader module content and that it would not be pedagogically appropriate to reassess students on this content in the reassessment session once they have finished the module. A member stated it was previously agreed with a former Senior Lecturer

that assessment components can be interpreted as learning outcomes to be completed and that LOs are not always neatly linked to discrete assessment components.

- It was pointed out that under the TEP project, teaching staff were encouraged to utilize innovative and diverse modes of assessment, which also results in a better teaching experience for students. Enforcing reassessment by component may result in module coordinators reverting to more traditional style assessment that is easier to administer.
- A number of members felt that it would be preferable to allow Schools to decide how to reassess students in a manner suited to their discipline. It was pointed out by another member that this could be complicated by cross school delivery and perhaps programme directors should make the decision.
- It was noted by a couple of members that in the absence of adequate deterrents, students can potentially disengage with assessments during the semester and instead opt to be reassessed to spread out their workload.
- Some members stressed the need for consistency across college in relation to reassessment as different practices can result in a bad learning experience for students, although another member felt that students are accustomed to different practices across Schools.

Some comments were also made in regard to the impracticalities of reassessing students on continuous assessment and the Senior Lecturer stressed that a different modality of assessment is already accommodated but that the current regulations imply that the weighting must be comparable. A member noted that a potential compromise might be to allow reassessment to be comparable in weighting, but not necessarily in the number of components that are reassessed.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked everyone for their contributions and advised that he will consider the matter further before bringing the issue back to USC.

USC/22-23/076 English Language Policy

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A memorandum from Professor Lorna Carson, Head of School, Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, dated 13 March 2023, with enclosed policy. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed the Quality Officer and Professor Lorna Carson to the meeting.

Professor Lorna Carson spoke by way of a presentation, explaining that this policy was developed in the context of the authorisation process for the International Education Mark (IEM) as part of the revised Higher Education (HE) Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education and Training to International Learners. She highlighted that the policy addresses irregularities in current admission language requirements and makes explicit the different tests and levels required.

In response to a query on the need for consistency across programmes, Professor Carson agreed that programmes can set specified requirements. However the policy ensures that where there is recalibration or new concordances issued to universities from providers of proficiency tests that this is applied across all test types.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Professor Carson for her presentation and her efforts to ensure that we have a policy that is consistent and fit for purpose.

Action/Decision

076.01: USC approved the English Language Policy and recommended it to Council.

USC/22-23/077 External Examiner Policy

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 12 April 2023, was circulated, with enclosed policy. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke to the item by way of a presentation, noting that this policy is in relation to taught programmes and that a separate policy for research programmes will be presented to the Graduate Studies Committee.

He explained to the meeting that the policy was revised by the External Examiner review working group. The revisions provide for greater flexibility for virtual attendance and that the eligibility criteria have been expanded to address issues in recruitment of external examiners.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited questions and comments from the meeting.

A discussion ensued on what constitutes a conflict of interest, and the usefulness of providing more details, with members highlighting that excluding co-authors of research as external examiners might unduly limit the pool of potential nominees in particular niche fields which commonly publish research that may contain a large number of co-authors. A member pointed out that it is in the best interest of Schools to appoint an examiner who will be impartial and that a degree of trust is necessary. The Academic Secretary stated that broad and vague guidance on conflicts of interest is recommended to avoid barriers to recruitment. The Senior Lecturer stated that he recognised that disciplines have a diverse range of needs and that this will be considered on a case-by-case basis and the policy allows for the Senior Lecturer to apply discretion in determining the potential for conflict of interest.

A member requested that further information is given on the type of education administration experience a nominee should hold. Responding to a query on the necessity for a nominee to hold education administration experience, the Senior Lecturer advised that this is not required, but is desirable as it allows examiners to consider the programme in its entirety and not merely at a module level.

Referring to Section 7.5iii of the policy, the Academic Secretary advised that further clarification is needed on whether physical attendance is a requirement or a recommendation. She further pointed to 7.5vii, stating that it was unclear if the protocols for conduct are based on the policy or the individual exams and that formatting errors across Section 7.5 should be addressed.

Thanking members for their input, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies concluded the item, stating that the suggested amendments will be considered, and the policy will come back to USC for recommendation to Council.

USC/22-23/078 Requests for Extension of Submission Deadlines

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies introduced the item, stating that the Senior Tutor wished to invite members to consider ways in which current approaches to requesting and approving extensions might be improved. The meeting was advised that the matter deserved more time than it was possible to devote to it at this meeting and that contributions would be sought via email or at the next meeting.

USC/22-23/079 Any Other Business

None

USC/22-23/080 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 28 February 2023

USC/22-23/081 Items for Noting (Section C)

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

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- i. **Open Modules for 2023/24(Updated)**

Memorandum from the Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee, dated 6 April 2023.

- ii. **Information for Schools on Programme/Module Proposal Development**

Memorandum from the Assistant Academic Secretary: Academic Affairs, dated 10 April 2023.

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- iii. **Expansion of FET prerequisites for Engineering (TR032) and Integrated Computer Science (TR033)**

Memorandum from the Further Education and Training Project Officer, dated 22 March 2023.