



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 26 March 2024 at 2.00 pm in the Boardroom, Trinity Business School.

Present: Professor David Shepherd, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Professor Richard Porter, Dean of Students
Professor Fraser Mitchell, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE)
Professor Mark Sweetnam, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA)
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent
Professor Evangelia Rigaki, School of Creative Arts
Professor Ann Devitt, School of Education
Professor Julie Bates, School of English
Professor Anna Chahoud, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Martin Worthington, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Sarah Hamill, School of Law
Professor Margaret Walshe, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Clare Kelly, School of Psychology
Professor Dino Hadzic, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Phillip Curry, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Jacob Erickson, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies
Professor Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Valeria Nicolosi, 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 Jan Manschot, School of Mathematics
Professor Matthew Saunders, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Cormac McGuinness, School of Physics
Professor Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science
Professor Richard Deane, School of Medicine
Professor Aileen Lynch, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

Apologies: Professor Stephen Smith, Senior Tutor
Professor Martha O'Hagan Luff, Trinity Business School
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services
Mr Eoghan Gilroy, Student Representative
Catherine Arnold, Education Officer, Students' Union

In attendance: Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Dr Pauline Rooney, Director of Academic Practice; Dr Susan McCormack, School of Education, (for item USC/23-24/071); Ms Lizzie Witcher, Academic Affairs, (for item USC/23-24/072).

USC/23-24/065 Minutes of the meeting of 27 February 2024

USC/23-24/059 A member pointed out that the decision should be amended to state that the reassessment schedule relates to the academic year 2023/24, rather than 2024/25.

The minutes of the meeting of 27 February 2024 were approved, subject to the amended wording.

USC/23-24/066 Matters arising

- i. **USC/23-24/059:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the reassessment examinations schedule 2023/24 was approved by Council. It was noted that colleagues in the School of Computer Science have expressed concern that the proposal was put forward too late in the academic year. Another member emphasised the importance of providing sufficient context and rationale for proposals to alleviate any criticism or concerns from academic staff. In response, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed that communication on proposals should be carefully considered. It was pointed out that the memorandum circulated prior to the last USC meeting had included contextual information and that DUTLs were requested to consult with their Schools ahead of USC considering the proposal. In response to a query, he advised that academic staff who have prior plans for taking leave during the reassessment period should seek a replacement.
- ii. **USC/23-24/064(i):** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the revisions to the Programme Handbook Policy were approved by Council.
- iii. **USC/23-24/064(ii):** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the proposal to cease Trinity Joint Honours combinations in Mathematics and German and Mathematics and Russian from 2025/26 was approved by Council.

USC/23-24/067 Senior Lecturer's Updates

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reminded members to ensure all relevant colleagues in their respective Schools circulate the end of module evaluation forms and to consider the results carefully.
- ii. In relation to the QQI Degree Classification report, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the report has been internally reviewed and will be submitted to QQI in April.
- iii. Providing an update on the review of academic policies, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that, following a meeting with the Registrar, colleagues in Academic Affairs are working on proposals regarding the revision of the Appeals process, as well as an attendance policy proposal, both to be submitted for consideration by USC and Council this academic year.
- iv. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked those for attending the demonstration sessions of various VLEs and advised that a proposal will be submitted for consideration by the Planning Group soon. He confirmed that a means for monitoring attendance has been identified as an essential requirement.

USC/23-24/068 Trinity Electives Proposals

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A memorandum from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education and Chair of the Trinity Elective Sub-Committee, dated 18 March 2024 was circulated, with three proposals for Trinity Electives attached. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited the ADUSE to speak to the item.

The ADUSE explained that, after requiring some modifications to the proposals, the TE sub-committee (TESC) approved the following three proposals for delivery in 2024/25:

- Polish Language and Culture (Beginners), School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
- Post-Beginners Chinese Language and Culture, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences

- Post-Beginners Japanese Language and Culture, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences

He endorsed the new proposals, stating that they are welcome additions to the suite of Trinity Electives.

In response to a query from the Academic Secretary regarding the demand for the proposed modules, the ADUSE advised that the TESC annually assess a report on student registration produced by the Academic Registry, as well as reviewing module capacity available in advance of a new academic year. In relation to evaluating expected demand for a new proposed module, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies asked that the TESC consider if a requirement for proposers to do some 'market research' should be introduced.

In response to a member's query regarding why low student enrolment on modules might be considered a concern, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that a Head of School might be in a better position to clarify this, but that he suspected that the concern might relate to a desire for more efficient allocation of teaching resources.

A member queried how students' language competency is assessed as appropriate for TE language modules and the ADUSE advised that students are screened in the first week of teaching, and then allocated to another module if necessary. It was noted that the module documentation should make this process very clear to students.

A member highlighted that Trinity Electives were originally intended to be assessed on a pass/fail basis and wondered if this would be reconsidered. The ADUCA stated that the progression regulations may make it tricky to implement this marking system and the ADUSE advised that a further complication is that not all students take Trinity Electives. A member noted their opposition to the idea of introducing pass/fail on TEs. Acknowledging that this model of marking is implemented on some programmes, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised the TESC to consider this question, and the Academic Secretary encouraged consideration of this model of marking.

In response to a query on the availability of data on the flow of TE enrolment between schools and faculties, the ADUSE indicated that the Academic Registry have developed a report on this, and it will be included in the TE Annual Report.

It was noted that from 2024/25, SF Pharmacy students will be required to take one Trinity Elective and this move was commended by USC.

Action/Decision

068.01: USC supported the proposals for three new Trinity Electives, 'Polish Language and Culture (Beginners)', 'Post-Beginners Chinese Language and Culture' and 'Post-Beginners Japanese Language and Culture' and recommended these to Council.

USC/23-24/069 Proposed Convention on the Titling of Minor, Special-Purpose, and Supplemental Classes of Awards

A paper from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was circulated and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited the Academic Secretary to speak to the item.

Speaking to a presentation, the Academic Secretary provided some context relating to the proposed convention on titling of non-major awards, explaining that it sought to provide a level of consistency across the Irish Higher Education sector. She explained that while non-major awards offered by the Irish Universities Association (IUA) member Universities, including Trinity, are regulated and align with the National Framework of Qualifications

(NFQ), a plethora of non-major awards are on offer in other HE institutions, and questions have been raised regarding whether or not they constitute an award.

Referring to the three questions that were circulated by QQI, she presented the proposed responses from Trinity. In relation to Question 1, the Academic Secretary advised that, with one exception, all special purpose awards offered by Trinity align with the ECTS values put forward by QQI therefore it is proposed that Trinity would agree to abide by the proposed titling convention for minor, special purpose and supplemental awards classes.

In relation to whether a formal NFQ determination for the titling of non-major awards should be introduced, the Academic Secretary proposed that Trinity's position is that a convention would be the preferable option. The third question posed by the QQI relates to the term 'professional' in award titles and the IUA recommendation that the term should be used only for level 6-9 awards that "*require external regulatory accreditation or recognition by the State or a professional body within a given disciplinary profession or awards that grant access to practise an occupation*". Internal consultation was carried out and she advised that it was concluded that the proposed wording is ambiguous and requires further consultation before a definitive answer is offered.

In the discussion that followed, USC endorsed the proposed responses as presented by the Academic Secretary. There was agreement that the IUA proposed wording is open to a multitude of interpretations, and that there are a lot of nuances that are discipline-specific when it comes to externally accredited programmes, with some students graduating already licenced to practice while other accredited programmes only allow students to pursue further education or training before they can practice, as for example, in Law and Psychology.

USC/23-24/070 Progression and Award Regulation Derogation

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A memorandum from the School of Physics, dated 19 March 2024 was circulated and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited Professor Cormac McGuinness, School of Physics, to speak to the item.

Providing some rationale for the request to cap reassessment work at 60% for students on the programmes of Physics, Physics & Astrophysics, Nanoscience and Theoretical Physics, Professor McGuinness advised that this request is in response to an Institute of Physics (IoP) requirement for accreditation following a review carried out in 2022. The IoP noted that the current lack of capping of marks for reassessed work in these programmes was out of line with other Physics degrees delivered in Ireland and the UK and, as a result, would only provide conditional accreditation for two years.

Professor Nicolosi, DUTL for the School of Chemistry, advised USC that Chemistry are in support of the proposal, and stated that Chemistry are also applying to have their undergraduate degrees accredited and that a similar request may be forthcoming because of this process. A member highlighted the importance of communication to students regarding the implementation of capping in order to avoid unnecessary appeals.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted the previous conversations at USC regarding capping of reassessments and advised that he will be recommending to the incoming Senior Lecturer to revisit the discussion.

Action/Decision

070.01: USC supported the derogation requested and recommended it to Council.

USC/23-24/071 Admission Requirements for the Bachelor in Music Education

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A memorandum from Dr Susan McCormack, Programme Director for the Bachelor in Music Education, dated 21 February 2024, was circulated and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Dr McCormack to the meeting.

Dr McCormack brought the meeting through the current application procedure and the proposal to allocate up to 200 marks to an interview/audition as part of the admissions process. She explained that the intention is to recognise student's instrumental competence and communication skills which will create a holistic and equitable approach to admissions to the BMusEd, which has only 12 places on offer each year. She advised that the partner institutions that co-deliver the programme, TU Dublin Conservatoire and the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM), have both moved away from admitting via CAO.

Due to a fire alarm the meeting was paused before reconvening.

In response to member's query, she advised that the value of 200 marks was decided upon to ensure that incoming students are still academically capable. She stated that the interviewing panel will consist of four people, one of which will be an external instrumental expert with no connection to the programme and that it is hoped this will protect against any conflicts of interest or bias in the process. She also advised that the written assessment is a pass/fail component and is not assigned any marks for admission purposes.

Professor Rigaki from the School of Creative Arts noted that the Music Department fully endorsed the proposal and may wish to apply a similar process in the future.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Dr McCormack and she withdrew from the meeting.

Action/Decision

071.01: USC supported the proposal and recommended it to Council.

USC/23-24/072 Statement on Generative AI

This item was moved up the agenda.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Ms Lizzie Whitcher, Academic Affairs to the meeting for the discussion. He stated that there has been some demand for an institutional level statement on the use of Generative AI and advised that the draft statement has been discussed by the Academic Integrity Steering Group.

Speaking to the item, the Head of Academic Practice advised that the statement was developed to set out a high-level institutional position on the use of Gen AI, but not to offer definitive guidelines, so that disciplines may do so as appropriate. She advised that the draft statement is aligned with the principles of the statement of integrity previously developed.

In the discussion that followed members differed regarding the need for a statement, with some questioning the value of such a high-level approach, while others welcomed it. A member suggested that the statement should also include a framework which outlines the acceptable use of GenAI across a range of assessment modalities. Several members felt the statement normalised the use of GenAI and suggested that the use of GenAI should also be problematized to acknowledge the ethical issues inherent in its use. Another member pointed out that the need to teach students how to critically use GenAI tools should also be addressed in the statement. A member raised the difficulty in verifying content of AI and GenAI output, and wondered if this wasn't covered by the other principles outlined in the statement. In response to a member pointing out that this is still an evolving space, the Academic Secretary suggested the guidelines be viewed as a living document that is subject to amendment as necessary.

Responding to members' comments, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the recently published guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research developed by the European Research Area Forum may provide useful guidance. The Head of Academic Practice advised that they are gathering examples of approaches to Gen AI use within Schools to support Schools in developing a discipline specific approach.

USC/23-24/072 Academic Integrity Regulations and Procedure Survey Outcomes

As the meeting was running over time, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that members will be invited to provide any comments or queries on the circulated presentation via email.

USC/23-24/074 Any other business

- The ADUSE queried if there has been confirmation regarding the start date for Junior Fresh students in 2024/25, and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that an update will be provided as soon as possible.

USC/23-24/075 Minutes (Section B)

USC noted and approved the following set of minutes:

- i. **Marino Institute of Education Associated College Degrees Committee (MIE ACDC)**
Draft Minutes of the meeting of 13 February 2024.
- ii. **Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee**
Minutes of the meeting of 29 February 2024.

USC/23-24/076 Items for noting (Section C)

None