



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 23 April 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 Stephen Smith, Senior Tutor
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 Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School
Professor Miranda Fay Thomas, School of Creative Arts
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 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 Jan Manschot, School of Mathematics
Professor Matthew Saunders, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Cormac McGuinness, School of Physics
Professor Richard Deane, School of Medicine
Professor Aileen Lynch, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Mr Eoghan Gilroy, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Ann Devitt, School of Education
Professor Dino Hadzic, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Juan Pablo Labrador, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science

In attendance: Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Rima Fitzpatrick, Assistant Academic Secretary: Academic Affairs ; Dr Pauline Rooney, Director of Academic Practice; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Mr Ronan Hodson, Head of Admissions, Academic Registry, (for item USC/23-24/080); Ms Lizzie Witcher and Dr Liz Donnellan, Academic Affairs, (for item USC/23-24/082).

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies congratulated members who were elected Fellows on Trinity Monday and welcomed Professor Norah Campbell to the meeting, noting that she has replaced Professor Martha O'Hagan Luff as the DUTL for the School of Business and Professor Miranda Fay Thomas, who has returned to her role of DUTL for the School of Creative Arts. He also welcomed Ms Rima Fitzpatrick, who has recently taken up the position of Assistant Academic Secretary, Academic Affairs. He drew attention to changes to the agenda shortly before the meeting, as an item was removed.

USC/23-24/077 Minutes of the meeting of 26 March 2024

Professor Nicolosi pointed out that her attendance was not recorded for the meeting, and Professor McGuinness requested that spelling mistakes in item USC/23-24/070 be rectified. The minutes of the meeting of 26 March 2024 were approved, subject to the above amendments.

USC/23-24/078 Matters arising

- i. **USC/23-24/068:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the three proposals for new Trinity Electives were approved by Council.
- ii. **USC/23-24/069:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the proposed convention on the titling of minor, special-purpose, and supplemental classes of awards was considered by Council, who approved the proposed responses.
- iii. **USC/23-24/070:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the progression and award regulation derogation sought by the School of Physics was approved by Council.
- iv. **USC/23-24/071:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the proposed change to the admission requirements for the Bachelor in Music Education were approved by Council.

USC/23-24/079 Senior Lecturer's Updates

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that following the approval by USC of the proposal to remove the additional 30 ECTS credits and amend the parchment for the Columbia Dual Degree, work on the conversion tables has been completed and the approved proposal will be submitted to Council. He thanked the ADUCA, Ms. Marie McPeak and Professor Mark Hennessy and the Dual Degree advisors for their work on the proposal.
- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies informed USC that the HBD Classification report has been submitted to QQI and he acknowledged the work of the Quality Office, Academic Affairs and the Schools who submitted case studies.
- iii. Providing an update on the 2023/24 reassessment session, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the proposed dates that were approved at the USC meeting in February, and subsequently by Council on two occasions, were not supported by unions. As a result, the reassessment session will take place on the week starting the 26 August 2024 and discussions will commence with unions on piloting an earlier reassessment session in 2024/25. He apologized for the uncertainty and encouraged colleagues to continue to bring attention to the stress caused by the current scheduling. In response to a query, he advised that meetings with all unions which represent staff in Trinity were held, but that the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) was prominent in the discussions. Professor Campbell identified herself as a member of the IFUT executive and noted that IFUT recognize there is a need for change to the academic year structure, but that wider consultation is required. In response to a question on when the decision will be communicated to College staff and students, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that this will be issued as soon as possible. In response to a question on the start date for first year students in 2024/25, he advised that there is likely to be a staggered start again for JF students in the coming year, but that this has not been confirmed yet.

USC/23-24/080 Admissions

A memorandum from the Head of Admissions, dated 15 April 2024, was circulated, with three enclosed proposals and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Mr Ronan Hodson to the meeting to speak to the three items.

i. **Proposal to introduce admissions criteria for South African National Senior Certificate (NSC)**

Speaking to the proposal to introduce new admission criteria for applicants who have undertaken the South African National Senior Certificate, he explained that it is necessitated by the increase in applications from SA students, particularly for entry into Dental Science and Medicine. The proposal will provide a transparent, formal set of equivalences to be included in the undergraduate matrix and the proposed criteria have been developed on the basis of existing requirements and an extensive benchmarking exercise.

In response to a query regarding how the proposed criteria differs from the current admissions practice for South African applicants, the Head of Admissions advised that they are compatible but offer more granularity, particularly in respect to maths. He confirmed that, if approved, the proposed admissions criteria will be applied to provide firm offers for admission in September 2024/25.

ii. **Amended admission criteria for Indian Standard XII**

In relation to the proposal to adjust the criteria for the India Standard 12 exam, the Head of Admissions explained that this is due to an amendment to the results policy by the Indian Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), who announced that they will issue scores in letter grade format rather than in percentages. The proposed amendments were developed in collaboration with the India student recruitment team in Trinity Global. It is proposed that these changes are adopted and implemented immediately for the 2024/25 intake. He confirmed that the amendment will not result in a change in conversion rates.

iii. **Adjustment to the Facilitated Entry Grades**

Referring to the circulated memorandum from the Associate Director, Admissions & Post-Entry, Trinity Access Programme Foundation Course Coordinator, the Head of Admissions noted that this proposal follows on from the approval of USC and Council in 2022/23 to extend the mapping of the Foundation Course and TCD Partnership CDET grade requirements to a 5-year average. It is proposed that minimum grade requirements will be based on average CAO points from 2017 to 2023, excluding 2020 and 2021 due to grade inflation during the COVID pandemic and will be in place for a three-year period, after which the minimum grade requirements will be remapped to a new five-year average. This will ensure that students are not disadvantaged by fluctuation in CAO points, while subject specific requirements will remain in place.

A member pointed out a minor error in relation to a programme name Clinical Speech and Language Studies and the Head of Admissions thanked her for bringing it to his attention.

Action/Decision

080.01: USC approved the proposal to introduce admissions criteria for the South African National Senior Certificate (NSC) and recommended it to Council.

080.02: USC approved the adjustments to the admission criteria for the Indian Standard XII exams and recommended it to Council.

080.03: USC approved the proposal to extend the mapping of the Foundation Course and TCD Partnership CDET grade requirements to a five-year average from 2017 to 2023

(excluding 2020 and 2021) for a three year period, after which it will be remapped to a new five-year average, and recommended it to Council.

USC/23-24/081 Education for Sustainable Development

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the ESD Fellows, dated 16 April 2024 was circulated and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited Professor Clare Kelly to speak to the item.

Speaking to a presentation, Professor Kelly explained that she has recently joined the team of ESD Fellows, having replaced Professor Félix Mezzanotte. She reminded the meeting of the ESD strategy and action, referring specifically to Action 1.4 and 1.5 which relate to enabling all undergraduate students to complete credit bearing modules that address ESD themes and develop key competencies for sustainability both within and beyond their discipline(s). She pointed to examples of how peer universities have approached the challenge of embedding ESD in their undergraduate curricula. She drew attention to the three ESD requirements which modules must meet to be deemed an ESD module which are to: 1) Go “beyond discipline” to incorporate inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives; 2) Address interconnected ESD themes; 3) Develop Key Competencies for Sustainability.

She brought the meeting through the three options through which Schools can use to implement ESD into their curricula to enable students to meet the ESD “beyond discipline” requirements. Option 1, she explained, is the integration of a newly designed interdisciplinary ESD module, which comes with a suite of teaching resources to support staff in delivering the module. She advised that this module has been co-designed with students and will be piloted in the Business School in 2024/25, with a pilot running in May and June 2024, and academic staff will be invited to attend. Option 2 is to enable students to complete an ESD-approved Open Modules or Trinity Electives, several of which have already been identified as meeting the ESD requirements. The third option is for Schools to propose a bespoke option so long as it meets the three ESD requirements.

Members commended Professor Kelly’s presentation. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited comments and questions from members and, to guide the discussion, he provided a number of questions to reflect on. In the discussion that followed the following comments were made:

- A member pointed out that actions 1.4 and 1.5 contain the term ‘enable’ and do not require students to undertake an ESD module, and noted that there had been a shift towards making it mandatory, which was not what was approved by USC previously and Schools will need to consider this further.
- Some programmes which are subject to professional requirements or follow pathways which do not allow for breadth of study through TEs/OMs will be restrained from embedding ESD in their curriculum in this way. Additionally, the complexity of the Trinity Joint Honours structure, and how this will work within it, needs to be thoroughly considered.
- A member noted that a common approach across the university would be useful but warned that students may not place academic value on the module if it is not embedded into the curriculum.
- Further guidance on what constitutes transformative learning and the definition of beyond discipline was sought.
- A member expressed concern about the content of the module, and in particular the narrowness of the focus, the Eurocentric rationale for the proposal, a thin engagement with the arts and humanities, the lack of power analysis, and the lack of deep recognition of the research and work already going on in this area within Trinity. The member expressed the view that the module does not seem to take sufficient account of a range of perspectives on the issue of sustainability. Another member who was involved in the development of the module sought to reassure USC that the content was sufficiently broad and inclusive.

- A member commented that more data on the student perspective on making space in the curriculum for ESD modules would provide a useful insight.
- While acknowledging that the initial review of ESD approved TEs/Oms was only cursory, a member noted that many modules on sustainability already exist, but have not yet been included in the list and stressed the need to build a ground up approach and recognise the work already being done in this area.
- A member felt that more options to enable students to meet ESD requirements could be explored.

Responding to some of the comments, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reassured the meeting that Schools are not being asked to commit to an option yet. He concurred that what constitutes 'beyond discipline' needs to be further defined. He stated that it is recognised that some programmes are confined due to professional bodies' requirements, and that other options, such as co-curricular activities, have been considered but the operationalisation of this needs to be further explored.

Professor Kelly invited members to meet with the ESD fellows so they can get a sense of the constraints that are faced by some programmes. She emphasised the merits of the options presented, stating that this approach can reach the majority of students in a timely manner, which is pertinent due to the urgency of the climate crisis. In relation to the ESD module that has been developed, the DUTL from the Business School stated supports provided to deliver the module are very comprehensive and implored other Schools to consider adopting the module.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their contributions and advised that further input on the matter will be invited from USC.

USC/23-24/082 Academic Policies and Procedures

i. Academic Integrity policies and procedures

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Ms Lizzie Whitcher, Education Policy Developer, Academic Affairs, dated 17 April 2024 was circulated and he welcomed Ms Whitcher to the meeting to speak to the item.

Ms Whitcher began by thanking USC for their input to date and noted that feedback received has been accounted for in the proposed changes, which have been reviewed by the Academic Integrity Steering Group (AISG). She took members through the proposed changes to the regulations and noted the updates to the Plagiarism policy, now entitled the Academic Integrity policy, and the inclusion of a procedure document. She highlighted the inclusion of a section on referral to the Junior Dean in the procedures document and stated that clarification on the process for instances where students have been cleared of academic misconduct will be included. The Curriculum Glossary has also been updated and definitions have been taken from the NAIN National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms.

In response to a query, she confirmed that DUTLs have final oversight of the level of the offense indicated and they have the discretion to account for extenuating factors, and the Academic Integrity meetings should also take these into account. She advised that students are required to submit a personal reflective piece as part of the academic integrity training, which can be used as evidence of participation if necessary. A member requested guidance for completing the reflective piece be provided to students. It was suggested by a member that intention should be accounted for when determining the level of the case, and Ms Whitcher pointed out that the process does this through assigning a higher score for upper years and the provision of training for first instances of misconduct.

The discussion turned to the recording of cases, and a member advised that the procedures document should include steps on how to access student records. The lack of visibility of student records when students are on programmes delivered by more than one School, as is

the case with Trinity Joint Honours (TJH) was also pointed out, and Ms Witcher recognised the complexities involved and reported that the AR have been working on the issue.

The importance of recording cases was underlined by the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, who encouraged DUTLs to ensure academic colleagues are doing so as the process relies on accurate recording of instances of academic misconduct. A member suggested that a more straightforward process is developed for level one cases to make it easier to record. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed that this could be looked at in the future. The issue of recording of misconduct cases involving visiting students was raised, and a member questioned if there was a mechanism for reporting cases to visiting students' home institutions, while another member wondered if Trinity receives records of incoming students. Ms Witcher thanked members for bringing the issue to her attention and noted that data is not currently shared with other institutions. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that data protection issues would need to be explored further.

ii. Student Attendance

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 17 April 2024 was circulated and he welcomed Dr Liz Donnellan, Education Policy Developer, Academic Affairs, to the meeting to speak to the item.

Dr Donnellan stated that initial discussions with USC and various programmes offices across college have informed the suggested changes to the Calendar regulations on attendance and additions to the Programme Handbook policy have been made to require Schools, Disciplines, or programmes to make attendance requirements available to students.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies drew members' attention to Section 25 of the Calendar Part II which allows him to refuse students the opportunity to sit Semester 2 exams as a potential consequence of non-satisfactory attendance and asked members to consider if this should be retained, noting that it is almost never invoked and creates an inequity in that the consequence cannot be applied to modules which require only coursework. The Senior Tutor stated that there is no merit in this provision as academic staff are reluctant to impose such a severe consequence, and other members agreed that less severe consequences should be available. A member requested that examples of consequences be provided to Schools. In response the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that Schools have the ability to explore lower-level consequences, and some shared approaches could be developed to ensure consistency across college. A member advised that it needs to be clarified that Trinity is not a distance learning institution.

Other members felt the potential refusal of permission to sit exams should be kept on the basis that non engagement throughout the year would likely mean students would not be able to pass the exams or meet the learning outcomes. It was pointed out that it would be useful in the context of preventing non-satisfactory students from progressing due to marks gained from groupwork-based assignments. A member noted the challenge in managing groupwork in the context of non-attendance and maintaining fairness for the other students and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged the challenges, noting the importance of clear expectations for student engagement.

A member pointed out the need to avoid any implication or suggestion that international students were subject to different (i.e. more stringent) attendance or reporting requirements, as is the case in other jurisdictions.

The student representative welcomed the amendment to section 17 in relation to the removal of the stipulation for students to reside in Dublin and stated that it recognises that some students cannot afford to do so due to the high cost of living and accommodation in

the city. He further highlighted the financial pressure on students to work, and circumstances which lead to non-attendance need to be understood before consequences are applied. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed that a balance needs to be struck in this regard.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies asked members to consider if students should be informed at the end of semester 1 if they will be required to repeat the year because of non-satisfactory attendance, and some members stated that it was better to inform students. In response to a query on how many students are required to repeat the year due to non-satisfactory attendance, he advised that it is very rare and only at the direction of the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies. One member informed the meeting that their school typically builds attendance into the grade, up to 40% at times.

A member pointed out the lack of functionality to ensure fair monitoring of attendance across College, stating that it is impossible to implement consequences in a equitable manner without such a system. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies concurred, and advised that he has been given assurances that such a functionality will be included in the VLE's improvements arising from the current VLE review project.

The discussion turned to communicating with students when non-attendance starts to become noticeable, as is done in the School of Chemistry. A member noted that programmes with practical learning activities cannot be repeated off books and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the proposal would facilitate schools to develop discipline-specific approaches. A member pointed out that that the Capstone is not covered in the policy.

Wrapping up the discussion, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their input, advising that the proposal will return to USC for approval.

USC/23-24/083 Senior Lecturer Annual Report 2022/23

Due to a lack of time, this item will be presented at the next USC meeting.

USC/23-24/084 Any other business

- i. The Senior Tutor advised that he intends to bring a draft policy on extensions for discussion at the May USC meeting and invited DUTLs to get in touch with him in the meantime with any feedback on the matter.

USC/23-24/085 Minutes (Section B)

USC noted and approved the following set of minutes:

- i. **Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee**
Minutes of the meeting of 12 March 2024.

USC/23-24/086 Items for noting (Section C)

USC noted and approved the following items:

- i. **Open Modules for 2024-25**
Memorandum from Ms Eilís Dunne, Undergraduate Common Architecture Office, dated 12 April 2024.
- ii. **Geography and Geoscience (TR062) Programme Structure**
Memorandum from Professor Matthew Saunders, School of Natural Sciences, dated 15 April 2024.
- iii. **New FET Route to Social Studies (TR084)**

Memorandum from Catherine O'Brien, Further Education and Training Coordinator, dated 25 March 2024.