

**University of Dublin
Trinity College**

Internal Memorandum

From: The Senior Lecturer

To: Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee

Subject: **Report on Broad Curriculum Initiative, 2006-07**
and enrolments for 2007-08

Date: 28th November 2007

Background

The Policy on the Broad Curriculum (see http://www.tcd.ie/Broad_Curriculum/pdf/policybc.pdf) was approved by Council and Board in 1999, representing a formalisation of educational objectives that have been at the heart of the Trinity learning experience for many years. It aims to promote the qualities seen to be desirable in a graduate, namely: analytical ability; creativity and reflectiveness; curiosity; adaptability and breadth of reading; social and personal responsibility; international outlook; articulacy; literacy and numeracy, and to support them in acquiring the skills which will enable them to make a valuable contribution to society and to be active, thoughtful learners in their life after graduation.

The twelve cross-faculty courses were each seed-funded for a five-year period through the provision of a Broad Curriculum lectureship. Departments accepting the five-year contract position were required to guarantee to assimilate the cross-faculty course into their overall teaching commitments at the end of the contract period, without additional resources.

Sixty postgraduate teaching studentships were awarded, through a competitive process, across 38 departments over the three-year period 2001/02 to 2003/04. The studentships were designed to promote small group teaching and learning, and to offer practical experience and training in pedagogy to senior postgraduate students. As studentships were funded for a three-year period, there was only one remaining recipient of a Broad Curriculum Postgraduate Teaching Studentship in 2006/07. Details of studentships awarded are available on the Broad Curriculum website at: http://www.tcd.ie/Broad_Curriculum/postgrad/pgsawarded.php.

1. Cross-Faculty Courses 2006/07

The academic year 2006/07 saw the highest number of students (514, representing 95% of the 539 students registered as at 16 October 2006) complete the Broad Curriculum cross-faculty courses since the initiative was launched in 2002/03. This shows a 17% increase in the retention rate from the previous year (figures based on number of students registered in early October 2006 compared to those listed for the Court of Examiners 1st May 2007).

The courses, spanning a range of subjects in the arts, humanities, social and earth sciences, attracted students from most undergraduate programmes in College (excluding the Health Sciences). The six-credit courses are aimed primarily at students in the Senior Freshman and Junior Sophister years, and are taught over the Michaelmas and Hilary terms.

In 2006/07 and 2007/08, thirteen cross-faculty courses were on offer (Appendix 1 details the thirteen Cross-Faculty courses on offer and their launch dates). Twelve of the courses were funded for a five-year period by The Atlantic Philanthropies, while the Department of Economics has continued funding for its course until and including 2007/08, from Development Cooperation Ireland.

1.1 Student Feedback

The Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning (CAPSL) surveyed students in Hilary Term 2007 to elicit feedback on the cross-faculty courses. An overview of the feedback from 2006/07 is included as Appendix 2 (courses are identified only as A to M, in order to maintain anonymity).

As in previous years, respondents rated highly the enthusiasm of lecturers for their subjects. They also expressed a strong level of satisfaction with the course content and with communication regarding course requirements and teaching methods. Students also indicated that they enjoyed the opportunity to read outside of their own discipline(s) in a structured way, and that the courses had developed their interest in the subject studied.

1.2 Credit, Substitution and Retention

In 2006/07, as in the previous academic year, 63% of undergraduate degree programmes (including individual subjects within the Two-Subject Moderatorship) provided for students to gain full academic credit in their end-of-year result by substituting a cross-faculty course for an element of the main study programme. A further 15% of undergraduate degree programmes permitted students to gain extra marks towards their end-of-year result upon successful completion of a cross-faculty course. Details of credit and substitution arrangements are given on the Broad Curriculum website, at http://www.tcd.ie/Broad_Curriculum/cfc/creditregulations.php.

Appendix 3 shows student numbers and retention rates on Cross-Faculty courses in 2002/03, 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07. In 2006/07, 76% of students who completed cross-faculty courses were taking the course on a substitution basis. The principle of substitution and credit for Broad Curriculum cross-faculty courses, adopted by Council in 2002, remains to be fully implemented.

For those programmes where successful completion of a Broad Curriculum cross-faculty course will be noted on the student's transcript, the retention rate was 61%. The retention rate for visiting students was 100%, (numbers rose due to late registrations and one-term visiting students in Hilary Term). As noted above, these retention figures were reached comparing class lists dated 16th October 2006 and students returned to the Court of Examiners on 1st May 2007.

A breakdown of the 'home' faculties of students for each of the Cross-Faculty courses is provided as Appendix 4.

1.3 Results 2006/07

The breakdown of results achieved in assessment / examination is shown in Appendix 5 *Summary of grades achieved in Broad Curriculum assessments 2006/07*. It can be seen from this appendix that 152 students (30%) achieved a first and 196 (38%) achieved an upper second-class honor.

1.4 Cross-Faculty Courses 2007/08

As of 5th October 2007, there were 549 students registered for the thirteen cross-faculty courses on offer in 2007/08 (registrations at this time in previous years were 539 in 2006/07, 593 in 2005/06, 523 in 2004/05, 603 in 2003/04 and 591 in 2002/03). In this, the sixth year of the Broad Curriculum initiative, five of the cross-faculty courses running are no longer funded by Atlantic Philanthropies. Funding for the other 8 courses will finish over the coming four years (see Appendix 1 for course launch dates).

2. Language Modules

The Centre for Language and Communication Studies (School of Linguistic, Speech and Communications Sciences) has offered language modules since 1993/94. The objectives of the modules are

- i. to develop students' communication skills for purposes of study, travel or work experience abroad during their undergraduate years, and
- ii. to enhance their academic qualifications, vocational prospects, and potential for future mobility.

Language modules in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Irish and Turkish were on offer in 2006/07. In many cases where substitution of a Broad Curriculum cross-faculty course is permitted (normally in the Senior Freshman or Junior Sophister year), students may alternatively substitute a language module.

In 2006/07 twenty-nine students successfully completed a module in French, twenty-seven in German, thirteen in Irish, thirteen in Italian, seventeen in Spanish and nine in Turkish.

3. Issues to be addressed

The principle of substitution and credit for Broad Curriculum courses in at least one year of undergraduate degree programmes will be greatly advanced in 2007/08 with the introduction in all undergraduate (and taught postgraduate) programmes of modules carrying credit in units of five (or multiples of five credits) up to a maximum of sixty credits for full-time study over one academic year, in accordance with the decision of the University Council in June 2006.

The credit weighting of Broad Curriculum cross-faculty courses was revised from 6 down to 5 credits for 2007/08 in line with the Council decision of June 2006. In order to accommodate the requirement that these courses can be substituted for credit within the total 60 ECTS credits permitted for each course year, it was necessary for Schools to provide 5-credit options for students not wishing to take Broad Curriculum courses. This has been problematical in some Schools, and although very substantial progress has been made, full substitution arrangements remain to be implemented in some courses.

This development has come just as the private funding for the Broad Curriculum is coming to an end. A condition of the five-year funded Broad Curriculum Lecturer posts was that the receiving Schools would undertake to continue to offer the cross-faculty courses indefinitely without additional resources. Achieving full integration of the Broad Curriculum together with the ECTS credit system in line with College policy will mean that all students' course choices can be factored into the calculation of the annual full-time student equivalents (FTSE), thereby providing a mechanism for the allocation of resources to Schools.

The future of the Broad Curriculum courses will be considered further in 2007/08 in the light of the recommendation of the Working Group on Modularisation and Academic Year Structure regarding the introduction of a "flexible combination of core and elective curriculum".

The Working Group produced its report in April 2007. The first of its two recommendations was that "College should consider introducing into its undergraduate degree programmes the structured but flexible combination of core and elective curriculum, incorporating the existing Broad Curriculum, as proposed in option CS3."

Under Option CS3 the undergraduate curricula would comprise a 'core curriculum' of 200 ECTS credits over a four-year programme, including both mandatory and optional courses within a given degree programme, and an 'elective curriculum' comprising 40 ECTS credits over the four years.

The Working Group Report was considered by the Heads of School Committee at its meeting on 5th June 2007, which agreed in principle to the adoption of new curriculum option CS3, but recommended that the substantive issues raised be addressed and considered by the Heads' of School Committee and other relevant committees before putting a final recommendation to Council.

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Appendices

1. Broad Curriculum Cross-Faculty Course Launch Dates
2. Student Feedback – summary of evaluation reports for all cross-faculty courses, 2006/07
3. Retention Rates for Broad Curriculum cross-faculty courses 2002/03, 2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07
4. Cross-Faculty Courses 2006/07 – ‘Home’ Faculties of Students as determined by their main course of study
5. Summary of grades achieved in Broad Curriculum assessments 2006/07

The Broad Curriculum website is available at: www.tcd.ie/Broad_Curriculum