Dear Colleagues,

Welcome back to a new academic year. The Trinity Education Project (TEP) is continuing to make progress and has moved into implementation phase. Below is some important information, including key dates, as we prepare for a new academic year structure for all students in 2018/19. More detailed information was issued to Heads of Schools, Directors of Teaching & Learning and School Administrative Managers in August 2017.

I recognize that this is a major undertaking. However, I believe that these changes will, in the long run, be of benefit to our students. If the TEP team can help you in any way with these changes, please contact us via trinityeducationproject@tcd.ie;

In the meantime, we are working with your School to schedule a visit in relation to the implementation of the academic year structure and other TEP related matters.

Kind regards

Prof. Chris Morash, FTCD, MRIA
Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer

Trinity Education Project Information Sheet:
Academic Year Structure 2018/19, Semesterisation and Assessment

Introduction and context:
Council approved a new academic year structure in February 2017, to be implemented for the first time, for all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, in 2018/19. The new academic year structure is predicated on the delivery of undergraduate programmes in a semesterised format, whereby modules are delivered and assessed within a teaching period. The change in the structure of the academic year will facilitate the assessment of modules at the end of the relevant teaching block. In this way, modules delivered in Semester 1 can be assessed at the end of Semester 1.

What are the anticipated benefits?

- It recognises that assessment informs learning. Students, module lecturers and course/programme co-ordinators have more regular feedback on student progress. This should, in turn, have a positive impact on student retention.
- Fewer formal assessment weeks supports a shift away from an emphasis on end-of-year summative examinations and encourages the introduction of a range of formative and summative assessments spread across the academic year. This, in turn, reinforces the move towards assessment as learning and assessment for learning, alongside assessment of learning.
- It should facilitate greater student mobility for both incoming and outgoing students where full modules can be completed and assessed within a semester.

When will the new Academic Year Structure be introduced and for whom?
The agreed academic year structure and a semester-based system for all students (undergraduate and postgraduate) will be introduced at the beginning of the academic year 2018/19.

What are the main elements of the new Academic Year Structure and what are the main dates for 2018/19?

1. There will be an earlier start to the Academic Year in 2018/19. Here are the key dates:
   - Monday 3 September 2018 - Orientation/ Freshers’ week starts;
   - Monday 10 September 2018 - First week of teaching for 2018/19 begins;

   **Note:**
   (i) The dates of Supplemental exams and 2017/18 Special Exams are to be confirmed by Academic Registry via the Undergraduate Studies Committee and will go to Council for approval.

   (ii) For 2018/19 and every subsequent academic year there will no Special exams

2. There will be two formal assessment weeks and one reassessment week:
   - First formal assessment week is at the end of Semester 1
   - Second formal assessment week is at the end of Semester 2
   - Reassessment Week at the start of Semester 1

   **Note:** All start dates will be confirmed by the Academic Registry via the Undergraduate Studies Committee and will go to Council.

3. The 12th “teaching” week of each semester will be a revision/ assessment week. This allows for a revision period before examinations, although it may also be used for assessment purposes in cases where it is not possible to accommodate all formal examinations within one week.

4. Taught modules\(^1\) are weighted at 5 ECTS credits or 10 ECTS credits (20 ECTS credits reserved for the Capstone project only): 5 ECTS credit modules must be taught and assessed within one semester, whilst 10 ECTS credit modules may be taught and assessed either within one semester or across two semesters.

   The 20 ECTS credit Capstone may be taught and assessed over one or two semesters.

\(^1\)Approved recommendations relate to taught modules only i.e. they do not include internships and placements.
Students should have a balanced credit load across the two semesters, i.e. 30 credits in Semester 1 and 30 credits in Semester 2.

Assessment should be commensurate with ECTS credit size and guidelines are in development as part of the roll out of the assessment framework.

Please note that for 2018/19, those programmes which are part of Phase 2 (All undergraduate programmes other than, Science, Engineering, Engineering with management, Clinical Speech & Language Studies, Health Science Programmes) of the TEP roll out are not required to change the module sizes for their current curricula in all years of all undergraduate programmes to align to the new academic year structure. However, if they wish to do so, they can. Phase 1 (Science, Engineering, Engineering with management, Clinical Speech & Language Studies, Health Science Programmes) Programmes are required to make the necessary changes. Please see table in relation to phased parallel implementation here

([1] Approved recommendations relate to taught modules only i.e. they do not include internships and placements.)

5. One week is assigned at the beginning of January for marking/results in relation to Semester 1 assessment, three weeks are assigned after Semester 2 for marking/results and for Courts of Examiners (see 7 below).

6. It is anticipated that students will be issued with provisional grades for Semester 1 towards the end of January/early February of Semester 2. Dates and procedures for the issuing of provisional grades will issue from the Academic Registry in a separate communication.

7. The main Courts of Examiners will take place during the marking/results period after the end of Semester 2 in order to determine if a student may progress.

8. Scholarship examinations will take place week commencing 07 January 2019 in the academic year 2018/19.

9. Summer 2018 will be shorter due to transitioning from the current academic year structure to the new structure

10. There will be an increased dedicated summer research period of 13 weeks from summer 2019 onwards.

How will the tight timeline between CAO offers and start of the academic year be accommodated?

The new academic year structure has an earlier start date of two weeks. Academic Registry, in line with all of the other Irish universities, will process the applications in time
for the earlier start. AR is currently conducting a scoping exercise to ensure that system changes will be in place in time to accommodate the new time-frame.

How will examinations be accommodated in a reduced time-frame, i.e., one week at the end of each semester and one week of reassessment in August?

- In order to achieve this, it will be necessary for a process of review and discussion to take place at local level, i.e., at module, subject and programme level, to ensure that the assessment expectations are commensurate with the credit weighting, the module learning outcomes and, ultimately, the programme level outcomes. Discussion at local level will also encourage reflection on the purpose (assessment as, for, of learning), range, quantity and timing of assessment.

- Each course/programme will need to consider how the curriculum for each year of the undergraduate programme will align to the new Academic Year Structure, including which modules will be delivered when (Semester 1, Semester 2), the type of assessment planned and the timing of the assessment component. Consideration needs to be given to all undergraduate courses/programmes taught across all years for all student cohorts.

- More generally, modules that are taught within one semester will have to be assessed at the end of that semester. This should result in a more balanced spread of assessment across the two assessment blocks. Introducing alternative, rather than additional forms of assessment should help to reduce the number of end-of-semester summative examinations.

- Consideration will have to be given to increasing the number or examination sessions in a day.

Who will decide the appropriate forms of assessment?

Schools, Course or Programme Committees and module coordinators decide the appropriate forms of assessment. They will be supported in developing a broader range of both formative and summative assessment practices. A number of resource toolkits in relation to assessment have been developed to assist colleagues and can be viewed here. Additional resources and guidelines for academic staff and students to support the transition to the new assessment framework are being developed by the Trinity Education Project (sub group #4 Pedagogy chaired by the Senior Lecturer).

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Trinity Education Project Team via trinityeducationproject@tcd.ie.

For more information please see the Trinity Education project website.