Dear Senior Lecturer,

Following the meeting of September 26th with you and colleagues in Global Relations, the Academic Registry has undertaken a review of entry requirements for admission to undergraduate degree programmes in respect of qualifications in languages other than English. This analysis was prompted by the first joint assessment of applications for the Dual BA with Columbia University, wherein applicants must satisfy requirements of both universities. Six applications accepted by Columbia did not meet Trinity’s stated requirements and were referred to the Senior Lecturer as admissions cases. Following assessment by staff in the relevant language disciplines, all six applicants were deemed to meet or exceed practical academic expectations for admission to Trinity language programmes.

Whilst this review has been prompted by the Columbia Dual BA, the Academic Registry and Global Relations wish to address entry requirements across all undergraduate full-degree programmes. Current requirements are articulated in relation to the Leaving Certificate (TCD Calendar 18-19, Part II A III Admissions Requirements I 10 "Table A" Note 8; Part II A III Admissions Requirements I 7 "Minimum Entry Requirements") without a clear indication of equivalencies in many non-EU curricula and qualifications. With the significant increase in assessment of applications from outside Ireland, Registry proposes that a process is defined for setting requirements in terms of other language qualifications as the need arises.

These requirements fall under two headings:

1) course-specific language requirements affecting admission to courses that include the study of a language (European Studies, MEELC, Joint Honors with a Language, etc.) where the requirement is H4 in Leaving Certificate or a Grade C at A Level, and

2) matriculation requirements affecting admission to all undergraduate full-degree programmes, where the current requirement is O6/H7 in Leaving Certificate or Grade C at GCSE level.

1. Course-specific Language Requirements

   a) We propose a streamlined process by which Trinity may recognise and set requirements for qualifications not previously recognised by the University. The process is outlined as follows.

      I. A proposal for recognition of a qualification would be submitted to Academic Registry through a template form detailing a) the nature of the qualification, b) the suggested criteria for matriculation and course-specific requirements, and c) other relevant information.

      II. The proposal would be assessed by academic staff in the relevant language disciplines, who would benchmark the qualification in question against best practice in peer universities and/or map to current standard requirements using a framework such as CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) to determine appropriate criteria for matriculation and course-specific requirements. Note: The Leaving Certificate Representatives may be in a position to fulfil this role.

      III. Registry would assess the proposal with regard to implementation in assessment and prepare a report for the Senior Lecturer

      IV. The Senior Lecturer would present the report for consideration and recommendation to the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

      V. If approved, the proposal would be recommended to Council.

We envisage that the timeline for this process would allow for admission to be granted based on the new qualification within the same application cycle, provided the proposal is submitted to Registry by certain deadline. For example, for the qualification to be accepted for admission in September 2020, the recognition proposal outlined above may have to be initiated by, say, 1st March 2019. This would align with the Admissions
Rollover period in which schools update course information (March to May), allowing new admissions criteria to be included in material produced for the subsequent cycle.

If approved, this process would be applied for the 2019/20 admissions cycle to commonly held US language qualifications including Advanced Placement, SAT2, Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) and BYU Language Certificate Program; as well as Irish Sign Language, which became an official language in Ireland in 2017.

b) We propose that applicants who are of native or near-native fluency in a language other than English be permitted to undergo an interview with a member of academic staff from a relevant language discipline as a substitute for a formal language qualification. The languages that could be assessed in such a way would be restricted and a special application deadline would apply, similarly to other courses requiring interview, e.g. 1st February. Further consultation with the School of Languages Literature and Cultural Studies would be required to formalise this process.

c) We propose that in cases where an applicant presents with a non-standard language qualification, but meets all other entry requirements, the application will be referred to the relevant academic unit for additional assessment and to consider whether a) or b) above should be implemented when reviewing the qualification.

2. Matriculation Requirements
Under current admissions policies, Trinity requires all applicants for full degree undergraduate courses to have formal study in a language other than English as part of their secondary school curriculum. This can place students from non-English speaking countries at a disadvantage, as they may elect not to formally study their first language beyond primary level, particularly if they have attended an international curriculum school.

We request that USC endorse the introduction of an exemption from the second-language requirement for non-English speaking non-EU students who are required to present an English Language Proficiency Qualification such as IELTS, TOEFL or the PTE Academic.

We invite USC to consider endorsing proposals under these two headings independently, before a final proposal on either or both is brought to Council for approval.

Jennifer Pepper, Ronan Hodson,
Head of Operations / Deputy Director, Academic Registry, AR/GR Liaison

1 Equivalencies for EU qualifications are set out here: http://www2.cao.ie/downloads/documents/Guidelines-EU-EFTA.pdf