



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of Trinity Elective Sub-Committee

24 November 2025

Present: Dr Mark Sweetnam, ADUCA, (*Chair*)
Prof. Andrew Jackson, ADUSE
Dr Pauline Rooney, Head for Centre for Academic Practice
Prof. Nollaig Bourke, HS Faculty Representative
Prof. Rachel McDonnell, STEM Faculty Representative
Dr Solange Daini, Academic Secretary Nominee Academic Affairs
Mr. Buster Whaley, Student's Union Education Officer

Attending: Mr. Dermot Cronin, Change and Transformation Project Lead,
Academic Registry, attending in place for Alison O'Flanagan
Ms Leticia Peralta, Quality Office for item 005.
Ms. Ellen Kampinga, Education Support Officer (*secretary*)

Apologies: Ms. Alison O'Flanagan, Academic Registry Representative; Prof. Tylor Brand, AHSS Faculty Representative

TESC/25-26/001 Welcome and Changes to Membership

The Chair welcomed the committee to the first meeting of the year. The Chair noted the changes in the TESC Membership and welcomed the new Associate Dean of Science Education (ADUSE) Prof. Andrew Jackson, the new SU Education Officer Mr Buster Whaley, the new nominee for the Academic Secretary from Academic Affairs, Dr Solange Daini, and the new Representative from Academic Registry, Alison O'Flanagan, (noting her apologies for this meeting) and welcomed in attendance Dermot Cronin, the Academic Registry Change and Transformation Project Lead, in Alison's place.

The remaining apology was noted from Prof. Tylor Brand, AHSS Faculty Representative.

TESC/25-26/002 Draft minutes of the meeting on February 10th 2025

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting on February 10th.

The Chair added that the secretary will circulate the finished draft of the minutes to all members after the meeting before they progress to USC in the future to allow members the opportunity to review them.

Action/Decision

TESC/25-26/002.1: The minutes of the meeting of 10 February 2025 were approved.

TESC/25-26/002.2: The secretary to circulate future draft minutes to full committee before progression to USC.

TESC/25-26/003 Matters Arising

The Chair updated the Committee on the matters arising since the last meeting.

- Suspension: The Science of Everything April 2025

A suspension occurred after the last meeting of TESC of the elective TEU00522 The Science of Everything. The suspension was approved via circulation and was communicated to USC on 29 April 2025 and incorporated in the TE Overview for 2025/26.

- Summer Circulation: Art in the Megacity Proposal June 2025

There was approval via summer circulation for updated elective proposal and return from suspension for TEU00262 The Art in the Megacity. This proved a successful return with 50 students enrolled out of 60 places at the moment. The Chair thanked the committee for their participation in summer circulation.

- TE Review Committee

Since the Committee last met, a review of Trinity Electives has been initiated in September by request of the Senior Lecturer. There is a certain amount of overlap with this Committee and the Chair thanks those members also involved in the Review Committee for their work. Updates from the Review Committee will be shared at the next TESC meeting in February and any members are welcomed to provide feedback or input to the review.

The first meeting decided on three focus areas of: Assessment, Teaching and Learning, and Governance & Administration. TE Module Coordinators should expect a survey before Christmas, and student input will be taken from the TE Student Survey data collected over the last 5 years. The Chair welcomed any questions or update requests from TESC about the proceeding of the Review.

- Other Matters Arising

The Director of the Centre for Academic Practice shared that the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) team has one fellow that has been mapping all Trinity Electives to the sustainable pedagogical approaches and Sustainable Development Goals SDG's. With the project wrapping up in December, the Director would be happy to share the results with the Committee. The Chair welcomes this initiative and asks the Director to share this when completed.

Action/Decision:

TESC/25-26/003.1: The Director of the Centre for Academic Practice to share details and results of Trinity Elective ESD mapping project with Chair and secretary of the Committee at the next TESC meeting.

TESC/25-26/004 Draft Trinity Elective Annual Report 2024/25

The Chair asked the Committee to consider the Draft Trinity Elective Annual Report for 2024/25 as circulated. This report contains a summary of TESC Membership, Enrolment and Capacity Trends over the last few years, which both remain stable. It contains new electives, modifications, suspensions, and cessations as processed by TESC in 2024/25. It contains a summary of the student survey which was largely positive. The report also contains the results report over 2024/25, and the enrolment data over 2024/25. Upon approval this report will proceed to USC.

The Committee discussed the process detailed for the annual review of elective results and the report on average results per module.

The ADUSE queried whether assessment results shared with Courts of Examiners include individual student data or overall module performance. The Chair confirmed that whole-module data is provided, including averages, standard deviation, min/max marks, and grade distribution, and the Academic Registry representative supported this. ADUSE suggested adding a coversheet for shared modules with anonymized performance summaries. The Health Sciences Faculty Rep noted she does independent analysis of the performance per faculty and suggested broader review of such performance trends, while also mentioning the annual Trinity Elective Results meeting focuses on extremes of marks but could allow deeper scrutiny. The Chair clarified that the meeting's purpose is to flag anomalies, not direct module coordinators, though scrutiny remains important as electives impact degree classification. The Secretary added that the annual report is circulated to School Managers and Module Coordinators, but timing may mean some Courts meet before receiving it.

The ADUSE highlighted that Tables B3 and B4 in the Annual Report provide useful faculty-level data and noted significant variation in standard deviations across electives, possibly linked to assessment rubrics. The Chair noted that such variation is not uniform and can result from differences in marking practices, assessment types, and factors like group work, which may narrow mark ranges. The Health Sciences Faculty Rep added that after the annual Results Review meeting, TESC gives feedback to module coordinators on high or low trends for their consideration. It was agreed that comparability between electives matters, especially for third-year electives impacting degree classification, though cross-discipline variation is expected.

The Chair noted that he will carry out a final proofreading of the report before it progresses to USC. He thanked all involved for reviewing the draft report.

Action/Decision:

TESC/25-26/004.1: The Secretary to update minor corrections in the Draft TE Annual Report before sending on for final proofread by Chair.

TESC/25-26/005 Student Survey Summary Report 2024/25

Ms. Leticia Peralta, the Business & Data Analyst from the Quality Office, presented the semester 2 results over 2024/25 of the TE Student Survey, with key comparisons to the previously presented Semester 1 results and trends.

The Faculty Rep for Health Sciences asked a question regarding the participant distribution as presented on slide 2, with Health Science reported at 3%. Due to the lower number of Health Sciences students taking electives, it was suggested that the number was shown as percentage of all Health Science Faculty Students rather than from the total number of students. The Data Analyst agreed to update this in future presentations.

The Health Sciences Faculty Rep suggested expressing module capacity gaps as percentages for better comparison, while ADUSE noted this metric could reveal inflated capacities. Academic Registry explained that semester 2 gaps are common due to mandatory modules chosen in semester 1, and the Chair added that large capacity figures can distort perceptions. The Chair concluded that enrolment gap is a useful metric and proposed future elective development could be more demand-driven, analysing trends by topic, field, and faculty.

On workload, the Health Sciences Faculty Rep asked how Trinity Electives compare to other 5 ECTS modules, noting it would be useful to know if the distribution is typical. The Chair felt the presented averages seemed reasonable and that extreme workloads would be evident, though variation between modules makes issues hard to pinpoint. Concerns were raised about the low percentage of students reporting 1–20 hours outside lectures, possibly due to misunderstanding the question. The SU Rep agreed this seemed low and suggested comparing perceived workload with actual workload. The Chair concluded that overall, students do not appear to have significant workload concerns.

On the slide 8 on website feedback, the Chair requested from the Data Analyst if the data on modules with lowest scoring feedback can be shared with the secretary in order to improve the website information and confirm content with module coordinators involved. The Data Analyst confirmed that full individual reports from the Student Survey are shared with each module coordinator just after survey completion.

The Data Analyst presented survey results on four new questions about Inclusive Practice, noting 60% of students disagreed that options for assessment were provided. Actions suggested for this question included rewording the question and a review by the Inclusive Practice team. Concerns were raised about the feasibility of offering alternative assessments and the workload implications for staff. The Director of Academic Practice explained that options for assessment align with Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which is being mainstreamed across Trinity, though logistical challenges remain. The Chair emphasized that assessment design should focus on achieving learning outcomes and that multiple alternatives may not always be appropriate. He concluded noting the positive feedback on the other three questions regarding inclusion of diverse perspectives and valuing student opinions.

The Chair thanked the Data Analyst for her presentation, and she left the meeting.

Action/Decision

TESC/25-26/005.1: The Business & Data Analyst to update the participation distribution percentage per faculty as part of slide 2 for future presentations of student survey results.

TESC/25-26/005.2: The Business & Data Analyst to share with the secretary the modules with a low feedback score for website accuracy before the next meeting.

TESC/25-26/006 Trinity Elective Proposal *The Art of Climate Change*

The Committee reviewed the proposal for *The Art of Climate Change*. Questions arose about whether school origin and subject variance are considered, but the Chair clarified that TESC only approves proposals for delivery, not governance or enrolment decisions. Concerns about the high assessment workload (50 hours) were addressed by the Director of the Centre for Academic Practice, who explained she works with the proposer, Jonathan Hodgers, as he is currently an ESD fellow at the Centre, and that the workload reflects a living lab format requiring collaboration. The Academic Registry representative confirmed that semester 2 delivery is suitable, as semester 1 faces more enrolment challenges and visiting students join in semester 2; next year, there will be about 39 electives in semester 2 and 30 in semester 1. The ADUSE raised potential competition with similar modules, but the Chair noted this could be flagged to the proposer. The Director of Academic Practice added that the proposer's goal was to target AHSS Faculty students, who are harder to engage in education for sustainable development, addressing a gap in current offerings. The HS Faculty Rep asked about the lack of exclusion of cohorts and whether Arts students or other AHSS cohorts might be unfairly advantaged; the Director confirmed the module aims for an interdisciplinary approach, and the Chair noted that varied weekly content and the living lab format mitigate such risks. The Chair also highlighted the living lab as a structured way to integrate group work, using a portfolio and testing a range of skills. The Committee agreed to approve the proposal, with feedback on semester 2 competition and a suggestion to explore semester 1 delivery.

Action/Decision:

TESC/25-26/006.1: The Committee approves with minor feedback and recommends the proposal for approval and noting to the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC).

TESC/25-26/007 Trinity Elective Proposal Cultivating Creative Confidence

The Chair invited feedback on the *Cultivating Creative Confidence* proposal. The Committee raised concerns about the low number of contact hours, noting that the module appears heavily self-directed, with 90 hours of independent work listed. The Chair acknowledged this and suggested advising the proposers to increase contact hours to enhance engagement and interdisciplinary interaction. The SU Education Officer supported this recommendation, emphasizing that more contact time fosters collaboration and idea-sharing.

The Committee discussed the use of Lego Serious Play as a teaching medium, with the Director of the Centre for Practice noting its strong research foundation.

Attention then turned to the high minimum capacity of 35 students, which was considered excessive compared to other electives. The Chair agreed to recommend lowering this figure and providing context on typical minimum capacities. The Academic Registry representative explained that while high minimums could pose challenges, semester 2 delivery offers flexibility for reallocation and visiting student enrolments.

Questions were raised about the lack of cohort exclusions, particularly regarding potential overlap with Engineering modules. The Chair noted that the proposal's week-by-week breakdown and interdisciplinary approach were well rationalized, and that the variety of material covered meant that no cohort would be at particular advantage.

The Committee also discussed the integration of AI in teaching and assessment. The proposal includes AI use in weekly lectures, which was welcomed, and the Chair noted that College AI Statement and further Policies are in continuous development. The Chair and Director of Academic Practice agreed that the inclusion of critical reflection in assessment helps mitigate risks such as grade inflation and unethical AI use, and that reflective practice combined with creative tasks is an effective safeguard.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposal and to issue to the proposers' feedback on enrolment patterns for the electives and to consider semester 1 delivery as an option, to strongly recommend the proposers lower the minimum student capacity and to recommend to increase the low number of contact hours.

Action/Decision

TESC/25-26/007.1: The Committee approved and recommended for approval and noting to the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) the proposal for Cultivating Creative Confidence by Portal with minor feedback to be considered.

TESC/25-26/008 Urgent Suspension Request TEU00512 Life and Death in Data

The Chair described the urgent suspension request due to staffing issues for semester 2 2025 as explained in the circulated memorandum and asked the committee for feedback or questions. The Committee confirm the issues described make urgent suspension inevitable. Academic Registry explained that 33 students are currently enrolled and explained how they propose communicating the suspension to students and how to ensure re-allocation to other preferred electives. Issues to be circumvented are electives at capacity, their limitations to increase capacity such as room size or assessment types and timetable clashes due to other modules timetabling into elective time blocks. It is agreed that the secretary will send out a communication to all semester 2 elective module coordinators to ask for collaboration with academic registry in the re-allocation process for the 33 enrolled students and to alert them of additional enrolments. The AR representative will contact the 33 enrolled students this week and collect their top-three preferences of alternative electives and start the re-allocation process.

Action/Decision:

TESC/25-26/008.1: TE secretary to send out communication to Semester 2 module coordinators to collaborate with AR on re-allocation of students.

TESC/25-26/008.2: AR Representative to contact enrolled students this week and start re-allocation process.

TESC/25-26/009 Modification Request TEU00291/292 Travel and English Literature

The Chair moves on to the modification request made by the module coordinator of Travel and English Literature to remove two learning outcomes that were added by a previous member of staff and to update the delivery by the new coordinators.

The Chair commented that it is good to see the descriptor being updated following a staff change. The Director of the Centre for Academic Practice wondered if removing the learning outcomes had an effect on assessment. The Chair confirmed that there is no effect on the assessment.

Action/Decision:

TESC/25-26/009.1: The Committee approves the modification request to remove LO6 and LO7 for Travel and English Literature for 2026/27.

TESC/25-26/010 Modification Request TEU00011/012 A World to Discover

The Chair moved on to the next modification request from A World to Discover, moving delivery for 2026/27 from semester 2 to semester 1. System-wise this does involve suspending TEU00012 and returning from suspension TEU00011.

Action/Decision:

TESC/25-26/010.1: The Committee approves the modification request to move delivery of A World to Discover to Semester 1 for 2026/27.

TESC/25-26/011 Trinity Elective Enrolment Data 2025/26

The Chair described the data found in the memorandum on 2025/26 enrolment data and asked the AR Representative to speak to the data and the subsequent item on trends found in late enrolments in the electives this year.

The Chair explains that the AR representative had also presented on the trends in late enrolments to the TE Review Committee, but some of the issues found are operational and should be addressed at TESC as well to be able to make changes to the process before next year.

The AR representative outlined the general enrolment pattern, with most students enrolling in July and August. While late enrolments are permitted during the first week of teaching, enrolments after week one are considered late and problematic because assessments begin early and significant material is covered in initial weeks.

This year saw a notable increase in late enrolments compared to previous years. Two main student groups were affected:

- Students required to take electives as part of their degree structure (compulsory cohort), of which 10% enrolled after week one.
- And students who could choose an elective or an Open Module (optional cohort), of which 8% enrolled after week one.

The causes include pathway changes, course transfers, and delayed engagement with the enrolment process. Pathway changes and transfers often finalize late in September or October, but the main concern is students ignoring the online enrolment process despite receiving up to 10 reminders.

To address this, AR plans to introduce text message reminders next year, as data shows most enrolments occur via mobile devices.

The AR representative explained that students who fail to select an elective by week two create knock-on effects for other modules, such as Open Modules and core Science modules, which may need to absorb students opting out of electives. In some degree structures, up to 20 credits are allocated for electives and Open Modules, meaning students

who do not select modules could face a record of only 40-credit for that Academic Year. After week one, these students would have to take Open Modules instead of electives.

To address this, the Chair proposed a hard limit: no elective changes after week one, except for pathway changes, course transfers, or administrative issues outside TESC's scope. Automatic enrolment into Open Modules was discussed but considered outside the Committee's remit and requiring consultation with the Undergraduate Studies Committee. The ADUSE emphasized that electives should remain a student choice and added that he does not want to create a system where students can select a second Open Module—avoiding electives entirely—which is not the norm. He noted that the online enrolment process may be unfamiliar to second-year students, as their previous modules were compulsory and auto-enrolled. Schools should therefore take responsibility for ensuring students engage early, as they understand the student context and can contact students directly to review their lack of engagement with elective selection. The Committee agreed to communicate the new rule to coordinators, encourage Schools to support early engagement, and review the impact next year before revisiting auto-enrolment.

The AR representative also raised capacity issues, noting that some students unable to join full modules request exceptions through coordinators, which TESC currently approves. The Chair expressed the view that special capacity requests should generally stop, though exceptional cases may still be considered. The Academic Affairs representative suggested engaging Junior Fresh students earlier to prepare them for elective selection, and AR confirmed efforts to do so. However, delays in Schools publishing programme handbooks and timetables remain a barrier, leaving students without sufficient information to choose between electives and Open Modules. AR is working to provide draft curricula and timetables by February to support informed decisions.

It is agreed that AR will look at the following measures for implementation:

- No elective changes will be allowed after week 1
- Text reminders will be implemented
- Schools will be contacted on their student's late engagement or open credits
- Auto-enrolment will be revisited next year if current measures prove ineffective

Changes to the procedure for Course transfers are being implemented by College and the impact of these will be monitored.

Action/Decision

TESC/25-26/011.1 The committee agreed to allow no further change in electives after week 1 of teaching.

TESC/25-26/011.2 The Secretary to send out communication to TE module coordinators on the new decision on students changing TEs and the deadline of week 1 of teaching,

TESC/25-26/011.3B The Secretary to send out communication to Schools to ask for their collaboration in the process of student enrolment to full credits and to collaborate with AR to resolve students with low engagement.

TESC/25-26/012 Any Other Business

The Chair spoke to three items under other business:

- The inter-institutional agreement with NCAD was reviewed by TESC in September 2024. We are now in the process of finalising and updating the contact to get the agreement signed by NCAD and the Provost early in semester 2.
 - o AR added that for the first time this year Trinity is receiving NCAD students, so far 20 students ended up selecting Trinity Electives in Semester 2. A further 5 students expressed interest and follow-up is occurring to see if they will still select an elective or revert to a core module at NCAD.
- The inter-institutional agreement with RIAM is similarly up for renewal and will be updated and reviewed before signing during semester 2 into September 2026.

The Committee discussed capacity remaining in the electives, if external colleges are taking places. AR Rep confirmed NCAD and RIAM take about 30 places each, there is more an issue with capacity in electives with high capacity max that is not getting fulfilled, for example elective in semester 1 with 220 places remaining, with a max capacity of 300, which could give a false feeling of safety for sufficient remaining capacity. Questions were asked on the number of programmes that take electives and for how many credits. It was noted that some programmes do not take electives especially accredited programmes in Health Sciences.

The Chair thanked the committee for their contributions.

The next meeting of TESC is 16 February 2026.