XX = Council relevance

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 21st April 2015 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, Professor Gillian Martin (Chair)
Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
Dean of Students, Professor Kevin O’Kelly
Senior Tutor, Professor Claire Laudet
Professor Jarlath Killeen, School of English
Professor Derek O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor David Wilkins, School of Mathematics
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music
Professor Elaine Moriarty, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Ken Mok, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Charles Patterson, School of Physics
Professor Mike Brady, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Jane Farrar, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Mary-Lee Rhodes, School of Business
Professor Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Michael Shevlin, School of Education
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor James Hanrahan, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Sarah Smyth, Director of TSM
Dr Ciara O’Farrell, Senior Academic Developer

Apologies: Ms Cliona Hannon, Director, Trinity Access Programmes
Ms Katie Byrne, Education Officer, Students’ Union
Ms Ciara Coughlan, Student Representative
Mr Trevor Peare, Library Representative
Professor Ciaran Simms, School of Engineering
Professor Des Ryan, School of Law
Professor Rachel Moss, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Howard Smith, School of Psychology
Professor Fáinche Ryan, Confederal School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Professor Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
Professor Sharon O’Donnell, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan; Ms Juliette Hussey, Vice President for Global Relations, for item USC/14-15/063; Ms Susan Power, Admissions Officer, for item USC/14-15/065; Ms Theresa Logan-Phelan, Manager, E-Learning, CAPSL, for item USC/14-15/066; Professor Patrick Geoghegan, Department of History, for item USC/14-15/067.

USC/14-15/060 Minutes
The minutes of the meeting of 24th March 2015 were approved.

USC/14-15/061 Matters arising
USC/14-15/045 Feedback had been received from the external reviewer on the proposal from Marino Institute of Education (MIE) for the validation of a Bachelor in Science (Early Childhood Education). The proposal had been revised to incorporate
the reviewer’s recommendations and was approved by Council at its meeting of 15th April 2015.

USC/14-15/046 The Plagiarism Working Group had met on two occasions and had considered the definition of plagiarism in the University Calendar and looked at examples of different types of plagiarism. The Group would shortly meet again to consider penalties and procedures around plagiarism and would provide a report and recommendations to USC and GSC in May 2015.

USC/14-15/052 Members who had not yet done so were reminded to submit their changes for the Scholarship section of the University Calendar to calendar@tcd.ie. Entries will be reviewed by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer and Sorcha De Brunner who will then liaise with colleagues to ensure consistency across courses.

USC/14-15/053b The bundling of TSM Latin and Greek into Classic Languages in order to reduce TSM course codes had been approved by Council at its meeting of 15th April 2015.

USC/14-15/062 Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer’s report

Education Project
The second meeting of the Education Project Steering Group had taken place the previous week and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer had given a presentation on the attributes considered desirable in a Trinity graduate in 10 years’ time. The Dean had reviewed research carried out in comparator universities and also considered work that had been prepared by the two previous Senior Lecturers on the distinctive aspects of the Trinity education. A small working group had been convened and had identified a number of overarching attributes, under which more specific ‘translational’ attributes were identified.

It is generally recognised that fostering the achievement of these attributes needs to be contextualised in individual disciplines. Students will need to be supported in becoming more self-reflective, whilst academic staff will need to be supported in terms of identifying the best ways of embedding these attributes in the curriculum and assessing their achievement. Many of the attributes are already being developed through our curricula, but they are not necessarily being articulated clearly.

The three overarching ‘enabling’ attributes which are being considered by the Education Project Steering Group, are:
1) Lifelong learning
2) Global citizenship
3) Academic Excellence

The more specific ‘translational’ attributes are as follows:
- Breadth and depth of scholarship
- Independent and reflective thinkers
- Intellectually and professionally agile and adaptable
- Capacity for creativity, innovation and transformation
- Social, ethical and cultural awareness/understanding
- Global outlook
- Effective communicator

The Steering Group will continue to consider the attributes at its next meeting. For this meeting, the Dean has been asked to consider the implications for programme and curriculum design of embedding these attributes in the Trinity education. It is anticipated that a paper will be circulated to Council for its meeting of 10th June 2015.
**TGRUSE**

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer had communicated to TGRUSE Trinity’s position on the draft policy consultation document on matriculation and minimum entry requirements. She had informed them of the rejection by Council and Board of the proposed changes to matriculation, which would see the removal of the requirement for mathematics and a language other than English. She emphasized Trinity’s intention to retain its current subject requirements for matriculation. She had also communicated to TGRUSE Trinity’s rejection of any attempt to undermine the autonomy of university councils to determine their own university’s admissions policies. Not all academic councils had met to discuss the consultation document, so a clear picture on the position to be taken by TGRUSE will not be available until after the group’s next meeting on 27th April. Informally, it would appear that any significant changes to matriculation requirements will be put on hold.

The Minister for Education and Skills will shortly make an announcement regarding the new grading bands for the Leaving Certificate where the current system will be replaced by 8 bands at both Higher and Ordinary levels (H1-8 and O1-8). This will necessitate the development of a new common points scale and TGRUSE has outlined a number of principles that should be adhered to in its development: the increments in the scale should be non-linear (to reduce random selection); points should be awarded for a H7 (30-39%); the higher and ordinary levels should be aligned; bonus points should be awarded for higher mathematics; HPAT results and scores should be combined for entry to medicine in line with current practice. Trinity will need to look at its minimum subject requirements and recalibrate them in line with the revised grading bands. It is envisaged that the principles will be considered by Council in May with a view to agreeing a new common points scale in June. The scale is likely to be refined as further research is carried out.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer had asked a number of members to review the various models of common points scale that were under consideration by TGRUSE and a member of the group had devised an alternative model that had been sent to TGRUSE for consideration.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer invited members to give their views on the principles. A discussion ensued on whether students should be rewarded for taking a subject relevant to the 3rd level course they wish to enter and opposing views were expressed. Opinion was also divided on the matter of awarding points for a H7 with some members believing that a fail result should not be rewarded while others agreed that having that safety net would incentivise students to engage with the more challenging higher level curriculum.

**USC/14-15/063 Update on Global Relations**

A memorandum on the International Student Barometer Results (Autumn 2014) from the Vice President for Global Relations had been circulated and a document highlighting the Trinity College performance compared with the previous year was tabled. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/ Senior Lecturer welcomed the Vice President for Global Relations to the meeting.

The Vice President outlined that by the year 2019, College is aiming to increase student enrolments from outside the EU from 7.8% to 18%. The Global Relations Office has worked closely with Schools and Faculties to work out how best to achieve this target through student recruitment. Trinity has also entered into partnerships with institutions overseas to encourage students who commence their education overseas to articulate into the second or third year of an undergraduate course at Trinity. Global Relations also works very closely with alumni to create internships, foster mentoring opportunities and encourage their role as advocates for Trinity.
The Vice President spoke to the results of the International Student Barometer – a survey for international students in which Trinity’s performance is benchmarked against comparator universities. The Trinity response rate had increased from 28% last year to 30% which was above average. The Vice President presented a high-level overview of the results. Trinity’s result had improved in some areas, including arrival and teaching, and had deteriorated in others such as accommodation and living costs. Course organisation, performance feedback and marking criteria remain an issue within some faculties. It was noted that visiting students and first year students are included in the survey, but would have very limited experience by the stage the survey is carried out in November, in particular, relating to feedback on corrected work.

The Global Office Coordinator is working to break down the data into the levels of faculties, schools, UG, PG, Visiting, Taught and Research and this data will be sent for circulation to USC.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked the Vice President for attending USC and she replied that she would welcome the opportunity to present the categorised data to USC or to individual schools in the future.

USC/14-15/064 Proposal for Discontinuation of Irish Studies

A memorandum dated 14th April 2015 was circulated, together with a proposal to discontinue the Moderatorship in Irish Studies, dated 12th March 2015. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer introduced the proposal and asked for members’ comments that would accompany the proposal when it is considered by Council.

The Schools of English and Natural Sciences are involved in teaching on the course and Directors of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning from these schools provided further background information on the proposal. The number of overall and first preference applications had been declining over a number of years despite efforts to recast the course to make it more attractive to prospective students. To date, 7 first preference applications had been received for 2015/16 entry. The number of students withdrawing was also a cause for concern and was having a negative impact on the remaining students due to the small cohort involved. Reasons for students withdrawing were that they were unsure of how the degree would be perceived or where it would lead them.

The Directors emphasised their commitment to the teaching of Irish Studies outside of the current programme and felt that the subject could potentially be opened up to a wider audience, e.g. to visiting students or as a Broad Curriculum module.

Members noted that it was regrettable that the course was to be discontinued.

USC/14-15/065 Admissions Figures 2014/15

A document detailing first preference and total applications to courses was tabled and had been previously circulated to Directors of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer welcomed the Admissions Officer to the meeting for this item.

The figures had been taken following the initial deadline of 1st February. The Admissions Officer highlighted certain elements of the statistics to the Committee. There had been a slight increase in the number of applications to Trinity and in overall CAO applications. First preference applications to Trinity represent 12% of the overall first preference applications in the CAO. The sectors showing an increase overall in the CAO system included Dental Science, Law, Engineering, and Technology. Across the sector, applications to arts and social science courses had dropped; however, the majority of courses in this area in Trinity had shown increases. First preference applications in TSM have
increased by 10% since last year. There has been a promising increase in applications from Northern Ireland - from 561 in 2014 to 725 in 2015.

There are approximately 6,000 applications in the CAO system for which no course choice has been made and students have until 1st July to submit their choice. The Admissions Officer emphasised that there will be a lot of movement in figures until the 1st July change of mind deadline. The number of applications from mature students decreased both to Trinity and overall. Non-EU applications are not processed through the CAO so this data was not presented in the document; however, the Admissions Officer advised that the numbers had increased from the same time last year and these applications will be accepted until the end of June.

The closing date for applications through the Northern Ireland feasibility study is 1st May. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer will update the Committee on the feasibility study at the next meeting of USC.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked the Admissions Officer for updating USC on the admissions figures.

A memorandum from the Senior Academic Developer, and Manager, E-Learning, CAPSL, dated 15th April 2015 was circulated together with a document entitled ‘Academic Practice Professional Development’. The E-Learning Manager joined the meeting for this item.

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning has launched a consultation process for the design and management of a professional development framework for those who teach in higher education in Ireland. Their proposed objectives for a national framework are that it is 1) inclusive; 2) clear in aims, objectives and mechanisms; 3) sustainable; 4) flexible; 5) research informed; 6) connected to practice.

The Senior Academic Developer invited members to consider how the Special Purpose Certificate, and the joint programme with UCD in Research Supervisor Development (non-accredited) fit in the context of the professional development framework. The Special Purpose Certificate is worth 15 ECTS credits and can provide a route through RPL (recognition of prior learning) into the Diploma/M.Ed in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

A document outlining the activity in the eLearning professional development programme had been circulated and it was noted that eLearning (CAPSL) plan to offer more flexible programmes to support the design and delivery of a blended learning environment. The e-Learning Manager invited schools interested in hosting a school initiative on eLearning professional development to contact her.

A member commented that it would be valuable for the majority of academic staff to have a recognised qualification in education and that this would have to be offered in flexible ways. Members wishing to offer further feedback should contact the Senior Academic Developer in the next week.

USC/14-15/067 Trinity Feasibility Study in Admissions
A Memorandum from Professor Patrick Geoghegan, dated 16th April 2015 was circulated together with an Interim Report, dated 31st January 2015. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer welcomed Professor Geoghegan to the meeting for this item.

Professor Geoghegan outlined that while it was too early to report on the success of the study, the process followed in the first year had worked exactly as it had been designed. The Department of Education and Skills was positive
about the study and the Secretary General had encouraged Trinity to continue ‘experimentation around the edges’. The applicants to the study came from a wide range of backgrounds: from DEIS and non-DEIS, fee-paying and non fee-paying schools, and there was an even split between students whose parents had and those who had not attended university. Of the 22 students who were admitted through this route, 6 would have been admitted through a later round of the standard CAO procedure, and 16 would not have been admitted through the standard entry route. The students who have been admitted will be monitored and the data gathered will be used to inform the initiative in later years. Further research will be required to gauge the success of the study in meeting its aims.

The three scales used to assess applicants in the study were 1) Leaving Certificate results, 2) the relative performance rank (RPR) of the applicant relative to other applicants from their school and 3) a personal statement. Each of these three modalities was assessed equally. Assessing the personal statements had proved to be heavy in terms of cost and workload and there was concern about how this could be scaled up. The RPR, however, was found to be easy and cost-effective to administer.

2014/15 is the second year of what was initially intended as a 2-year pilot study. The Implementation Group had met on the previous day and agreed the study should continue as is for a 3rd year and that the possibility of opening it up to other colleges in Ireland in the 4th year should be explored.

Professor Geoghegan acknowledged the extensive help the study had received from the College community and particularly wished to thank the Students’ Union, USI, the Implementation Group, and Cliona Hannon, the Project Manager. He invited members to contact him with expressions of interest in their course being included in year 4 of the study. The interim report will be presented to Council and approval will be sought to continue for a third year and fourth year.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked Professor Geoghegan for updating the Committee on the study.

**USC/14-15/068 Any other business**

A member noted that the examinations timetable created issues for individual students each year. It was agreed that the draft timetable that is produced annually in February should be presented in a more accessible format, which could then usefully be scrutinised by Schools to check for issues arising from particular subject combinations prior to the publication of the official timetable.

A member noted that preparing multiple examinations to meet a requirement for sympathetic flexibility was very difficult for certain types of examinations.

**USC/14-15/069 Items for noting**

USC noted the following documents which had been circulated for information:

1. **Calendar Changes 2015/16**
   - a) Two Subject Moderatorship - Film Studies
   - b) Moderatorship in Science