A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 22\textsuperscript{nd} February 2013 at 3.00pm in the Board Room.

Present: Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Patrick Geoghegan (Chair)
Dean of Students, Professor Amanda Piesse
Senior Tutor, Professor Claire Laudet
Assistant Academic Secretary, Ms Orla Sheehan

Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)
Professor Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music
Professor Dirk Johannsen, Confederal School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Professor Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Jarlath Kileen, School of English
Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Professor Graham Harper, School of Physics
Professor Ken Mok, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, School of Chemistry
Professor Sharon O’Donnell, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Francis O’Toole, Director of BESS
Dr Ciara O’Farrell, Senior Academic Developer
Mr Daniel Ferrick, Education Officer, Students’ Union
Ms Sinead Leydon, Student Representative
Professor Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities

Apologies: Professor Pádraig de Paor, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Michael Shevlin, School of Education
Professor Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Eleanor Denny, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Dermot O’Dwyer, School of Engineering
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Mary Lee Rhodes, School of Business
Professor Michael Gormley, School of Psychology
Professor Ivana Bacik, School of Law
Professor Moray McGowan, Director of TSM
Professor David Chew, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Professor Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Ms Cliona Hannon, Director Trinity Access Programmes

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan; Mr Trevor Peare (Library Representative); Professor Veronica Campbell, Dean of Graduate Studies (for item USC/12-13/046); Mr Declan Treanor, Director of College Disability Service (for item USC/12-13/047).

USC/12-13/043 Minutes
The minutes of the meeting of 22\textsuperscript{nd} January 2013 were approved.

USC/12-13/044 Matters arising
There were no matters arising that do not appear later on the agenda.
A course proposal for a Bachelor in Science in Radiation Therapy in conjunction with Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), dated February 2013, was circulated. Professor Leech reported the following:
- the course is similar to the one year honors programmes offered in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, approved by the Undergraduate Studies Committee in November 2011,
- the proposed intake for the first year is 5 students,
- students from SIT would join the Senior Sophister year in Trinity for the first semester and attend SIT for the second semester,
- there would be a cost deficit to the School in providing the course, but an overall net income to College,
- it will be necessary for examinations to take place simultaneously in Ireland and Singapore.

The Senior Tutor queried how students would be supported during their time at Trinity especially if they arrive before the start of term. Professor Leech noted that orientation would begin in the School with one staff member having responsibility for advising and familiarising the students with College processes and supports.

The Senior Lecturer congratulated the School on their collaboration with SIT. Feedback from SIT was excellent and student feedback was very positive. The proposal will proceed to external review. USC recommended the course proposal to Council.

The Senior Lecturer welcomed the Dean of Graduate Studies to the meeting for this item. The Provost had asked the Taskforce to consolidate Trinity’s approach to online education. It had consulted with Schools, focus groups, heads of student services, IS Services and reviewed the experience of the University of Edinburgh which has recently entered this market. Trinity is behind many Irish and international universities in the provision of online education but Schools are very interested in developing capacity in this area. Most schools preferred a blended approach. Recognising the need to provide flexible modes of learning in the postgraduate area, some Schools favour online delivery in some professional areas.

The Dean confirmed that Trinity would not be offering a fully online undergraduate degree. The three main issues under consideration were:
1) technology enhanced learning in existing curricula,
2) offering more blended or fully online degrees, especially in the postgraduate area,
3) providing open access courses online (massive open online courses, MOOCS.)

The Dean noted the following resource requirements:
- investment in technology
- access to expertise to adapt academic materials for online use,
- multimedia skills training,
- supporting staff to develop new pedagogical approaches,
- freeing up of staff time.

The Students’ Union Education Officer commented that the Symposium for Online Education on 19th February 2013 had demonstrated some excellent examples of online education in Trinity. He asked if a list could be prepared detailing best practice of online education in College, and showing the benefits of this. Presentations from the symposium can be downloaded at [www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/OnlineHigherEducationSymposium/index.php](http://www.tcd.ie/Graduate_Studies/OnlineHigherEducationSymposium/index.php)

The following points were made by members of USC:
- online education would provide opportunities for research collaboration, and to enhance College’s global links,
- technologically-minded students could work with lecturers on creating online resources,
- CAPSL offers curriculum design modules which provide training for online education.

The Dean commented that students would favour greater use of VLE. Students want a single repository for course material and to be able to participate online when they are on placements; an app version of VLE could facilitate this. The Dean asked that Directors of Teaching and Learning discuss online education with their academic staff and ensure they are adequately prepared if it goes ahead.

USC as a group expressed its support for the work of the Taskforce and the issues it was considering. It recognised the importance of showing leadership in the area of online education, and also ensuring this work was adequately resourced and supported. The Senior Lecturer congratulated the Dean on the initiative and the progress to date.

The Senior Lecturer also congratulated the Dean of Graduate Studies on the pilot scheme she has developed with the Graduates' Student Union and CAPSL to recognise and reward the great work done by postgraduates in delivering the educational mission of the College. The Trinity Teaching Award for Postgraduate Students will run on a pilot basis in 2012/13 in order to identify and recognise individual postgraduate students who make a substantial contribution to undergraduate student learning, and the Senior Lecturer encouraged directors to make sure their schools took part.

USC/12-13/047 Proposed revisions to admissions procedures for students with disabilities

The Director of College Disability Service attended for this item.

(i) A memorandum from the Director of College Disability Service, dated 6th February 2013, was circulated. The Director proposed a modification to the requirement to present a second language or mathematics for matriculation purposes for a small number of applicants to College with sensory and communication disabilities - where these subjects do not form part of the chosen course. A waiver of the second language requirement is currently granted to students with specific learning difficulties and to students who are deaf or who have a significant hearing impairment. A waiver of the mathematics requirement is currently granted to students with dyscalculia. The Director noted that a small number of College applicants with sensory and communication disabilities failed to meet either the mathematics or language requirements and were therefore at a disadvantage in accessing courses in Trinity. The Disability Service would monitor applications from students with these disabilities by reviewing course preferences and subject-specific requirements, and would consult with the relevant academic directors in regard to course components which may affect eligibility for a waiver. The number of students who would be granted and accept the waiver would be very low. USC approved the proposal.

(ii) A memorandum from the Director of College Disability Service, dated 3rd February 2013, was circulated. The Director proposed prioritisation of DARE offers to target groups of students with sensory and physical disabilities. Students with these disabilities had been identified by the HEA and College as being under-represented in College. The HEA National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013 set a target for the number of students in higher education with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities to be doubled. Data shows that there has been no significant increase in these cohorts in HEIs over the last seven years. The Director proposed that to address the imbalance of offers between disability groups, offers would be made first to DARE eligible applicants within the target groups, and remaining places offered to all other eligible students with disabilities. Students in the target group were most disadvantaged at second level and often did not progress to third level education. This proposal would assist some of these students in getting to College, and would assist College in meeting its own and the HEA's target for increasing the number of students with these disabilities in College. The data will be analysed for the students entering in September 2013, to assess the implications, although there will be no changes to the way students are admitted through DARE this year. The scheme will be formally adopted for entry in September 2014. USC approved the proposal.
USC/12-13/048 Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies’ update on Trinity Explore and the International Student Barometer

(i) **www.tcd.ie/explore**  The Senior Lecturer informed the meeting that the Trinity Explore website had recently gone live. All secondary schools on the island have been contacted about the initiative, and positive feedback has been received from a number of areas, including from the Department of Education and Skills.

The Senior Lecturer thanked a number of people involved with the project, starting with the team who worked on Explore, Dr. Gary Baugh, the film-maker, Ms Maura Horan, the College Web Officer who designed the site, and Ms Norah O’Connor, of the Office of the Vice-Provost, who co-ordinated everything logistically, as well as all the student ambassadors who contributed so much to the project. He also acknowledged the support Ms Georgina Smithwick, the director of CourseHub, and Mr Callum Smith, a student who allowed some of his video work to be used.

(ii) The results of the International Student Barometer have recently become available. The Senior Lecturer advised that one of the academic issues arising from the results is the length of time taken to return essays and coursework. The Senior Academic Developer noted that international best practice indicated that a three-week turnaround time was ideal but that this had to be balanced with the need to provide effective feedback to students. The Students’ Union Education Officer noted the need to manage the expectations of students - students should be advised of when their work would be returned and staff should adhere to this timeframe. While it would be possible to develop a policy on an appropriate timeframe for return of work this is an issue that needs to be dealt with at School-level. However, the Senior Lecturer and the Senior Academic Developer will prepare a discussion document as a future agenda item.

USC/12-13/049 Guidelines on Sympathetic Flexibility

XX A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, dated 18th February 2013, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer advised that the guidelines for sympathetic flexibility had been prepared in consultation with the Senior Tutor, the Vice-Provost and the Dean of Students. The three main suggestions were:

- course requirements would normally take precedence in areas where professional competencies are being developed and where there is a risk of a student being deskilled,
- where possible, College will attempt to be sympathetic to all students involved in high-level activities,
- a group, chaired by the Vice-Provost or nominee, and including the Dean of Students, the Senior Lecturer, the student’s tutor (or the Senior Tutor) and the course director, would make the final decision regarding flexibility where there is any disagreement; although it is expected that there will be very few cases where this will be necessary

The Committee approved the guidelines for sympathetic flexibility.

USC/12-13/050 Dean of Students’ update

(i) A memorandum from the Dean of Students on the National Student Survey, dated 18th February 2013, was circulated and further information is available on **www.studentsurvey.ie**  The ‘National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030’ report recommended that HEIs should gather feedback from students which could inform institutional and programme management as well as national policy. The purpose of the survey is to measure student engagement with higher education and is based on existing student surveys, in particular, the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE). Students will shortly be invited to take part in the pilot survey, which is conducted online, taking approximately 15 minutes. A prominent poster campaign will be used to advise students to complete the survey and a number of emails will be sent to all students. The College Secretary will write to academic staff to advise them of the process. A participation rate of
25% is considered sufficient to provide useful feedback. Individual student responses will be collected confidentially and combined to give a national picture. A full report on the 2013 pilot survey will be published in September 2013. In future the survey will take place biennially in March and results may be available earlier. Each institution will receive its own results and a report at national level will also be produced. It will not be possible to use the results from the survey to rank institutions. A discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- September was too late in the academic year to report on the feedback,
- 25% take-up is quite low; a great effort would be needed to encourage students to take part,
- should College consider linking its internal module evaluation to the NSS?
- College needs to foster a culture of doing surveys and providing feedback.

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Dean of Students for her report.

(ii) A memorandum from the Dean of Students regarding an Update on the Working Group on Residential Accommodation, dated 18th February 2013, was circulated. The Dean of Students advised that residential accommodation in College was under enormous pressure. Numerous different issues had to be taken into account when considering allocation of College-managed accommodation, including increased demand due to College’s global relations strategy; College’s obligation to Fellows and scholars; College’s duty of care to students; and the needs of disabled students. The Provost had established a working group, chaired by the Dean of Students, to quantify the demands for College-managed residential accommodation; assess how College’s strategic priorities impact on the likely demand for this accommodation; and propose principles for the allocation of accommodation. The Working Group will consult with the Senior Dean in relation to residential accommodation of staff and Fellows Emeriti. The group will provide an interim report to the Provost in March 2013 and a final report in May 2013.

Written submissions from a number of stakeholders on the prioritisation and demand for residential accommodation have been invited. Responses were collated and discussed at a meeting on 21st February 2013. The Internationalisation Office argued for accommodation to be guaranteed to all international students in their first year. The Graduate Students’ Union stated a preference for the occupancy in College rooms to represent College as a whole. It was noted that the transparency of allocation of College-managed accommodation could be improved. The Senior Tutor noted that socio-economic factors are not part of the criteria for the allocation of accommodation. The accommodation is socially exclusive as it is highly priced; often of a higher price than other local accommodation. A member noted that visiting students often had a difficulty paying for a whole term in advance. The SU Education Officer considered that those who contribute substantially to College life should get accommodation, e.g. heads of large societies, Student Union Officers, etc. He commented that much of the accommodation for students with disabilities needs to be updated and the Director of Disability Services is driving work in this area. Student Representatives noted that on-campus accommodation is very beneficial in a student’s final year as it allows them to commit to their extra-curricular activities and enables easy access to College facilities.

The Dean of Students invited USC members to submit to her any comments on allocation of College-managed accommodation.

(iii) A memorandum from the Dean of Students on Orientation, dated 18th February 2013, was circulated. The Dean advised that the Provost had asked her to coordinate the orientation process in College. Currently orientation was fragmented across College. The objective of the orientation review is to provide a strategy and implementation plan to provide a student-centred orientation process for all new entrants to Trinity. In the following weeks, a group would meet to discuss how to bring together the various pieces of the orientation process.
process; the Dean would welcome input from USC on the academic side. The Dean will email members to invite them to send examples of good practice in orientation.

To avoid clashes with events organised separately, it was suggested that one person in each School could be appointed as the contact person for orientation matters. The use of technology such as Facebook and apps was considered as a potential resource in the orientation process. The Senior Lecturer noted that orientation should be ongoing and could begin before a student arrives at College. The Senior Lecturer thanked the Dean of Students for her update to the committee and her hard work on the initiatives.

USC/12-13/051 Any other business
There was no other business.

USC/12-13/052 Items for noting
USC noted the following item: