

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 1st November 2011 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Senior Lecturer, Dr Patrick Geoghegan (*Chair*)
Dean of Students, Dr Amanda Piesse
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)
Dr Evangelia Rigaki, School of Drama, Film and Music
Dr Philip Coleman, School of English
Dr Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities
Dr Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Dr Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Dr Eleanor Denny, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Ms Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Dr Jim Quinn, School of Business
Dr Michael Gormley, School of Psychology
Dr Dermot O'Dwyer, School of Engineering
Dr Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Dr David Chew, School of Natural Sciences
Dr Stefan Hutzler, School of Physics
Dr Wolfgang Schmitt, School of Chemistry
Dr Clair Gardiner, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Dr Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
Dr Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Dr Anne Marie Healy, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Moray McGowan, Director of TSM
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Ms Rachel Barry, Education Officer, Students' Union
Mr Daniel Ferrick, Student Representative

Apologies: Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
Dr Zuleika Rodgers, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Dr Michael Shevlin, School of Education
Dr Oran Doyle, School of Law
Dr Francis O'Toole, Director of BESS
Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Dr Catherine McCabe, School of Nursing and Midwifery

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Mr Trevor Peare (Library Representative), Ms Alexandra Anderson, Professor Juliette Hussey and Professor Deirdre Connolly (for UGS/11-12/015), Dr Helen Kelly (for UGS/11-12/016 and UGS/11-12/017)

The Senior Lecturer welcomed the Dean of Students to her first meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC). He also noted that the Assistant Academic Secretary had been invited to attend the meeting given the relevance of agenda items to her area of work.

UGS/11-12/012 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 13th September 2011 were approved subject to the correction of title from 'Mr' to 'Dr' in respect of Colm Stephens.

UGS/11-12/013 Matters arising

- (i) *UGS/11-12/003*: The Senior Lecturer advised that the proposed revised membership of USC was approved at Council.
- (ii) *UGS/11-12/005*: The Senior Lecturer reported that College would have to investigate the costs associated with providing electronic tablet devices to

committee members, as well as examine the practicality in terms of wi-fi network access, and that a final decision was unlikely before the end of the academic year.

- (iii) *UGS/11-12/006*: The Senior Lecturer reported that he had attended the conference 'Transition or transaction?', organised by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA), in September, along with the Provost and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer. Discussion at the conference mainly focused on the papers already submitted, which can be found at <http://transition.ie/papers.htm>. He noted that the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer has tasked him with chairing a working group to draft a response to the 'Hyland Report', as well as examine some of the wider issues arising out of the discussion, and explained that members of USC are welcome to send him comments and contributions.
- (iv) *UGS/11-12/007*: The Senior Lecturer noted that Council approved the two proposals related to the GeneSIS project.

UGS/11-12/014 Teaching Awards

Introducing the item, the Senior Lecturer noted that some minor modifications had been made to the application procedures for the Provost's Teaching Awards for 2011/12 to make the process more streamlined. There are now two stages to the process. In the first stage nominated candidates are required to fill out an application form; only those who are shortlisted are filmed by CAPSL in a teaching setting. This year the Provost sent an email about the awards to all staff and students reinforcing the value which College places on promoting teaching as a scholarly activity, and the importance attached to enriching the learning opportunities of students. The Senior Lecturer suggested that USC should consider the revised procedure and changes to the eligibility criteria, possibly to include postgraduates and those on the casual payroll, later in the academic year.

The Senior Lecturer noted that postgraduate students, as teaching assistants, make a significant contribution to teaching, and that the work of postdoctoral staff should also be recognised in some way. In a broad discussion, there were differing opinions as to whether recognition should be given at College level or at school level. The Library representative noted that there are other groups of staff which have teaching responsibilities, for example, Library staff and he requested that other groups also be considered for recognition. In terms of recognition the importance of a link to promotion procedures was also highlighted.

Responding to a question about the revised process, the Senior Lecturer advised that if there is no teaching in the second semester then nominated candidates can arrange to have one of their classes filmed by CAPSL in the first semester but that it would only be viewed if the candidate is shortlisted.

There were varying levels of support for using video evidence as part of the assessment process. However, the Senior Lecturer noted that it was a very useful method to verify claims made by applicants in their written submissions, and that it was now being accepted as best practice elsewhere.

The Senior Lecturer thanked members for their comments and advised that the committee would return to this item in 2012 to discuss the issues raised in more detail and to review the current process.

UGS/11-12/015 Transnational Education

A memorandum from the Vice-Provost for Global Relations, 'Global Relations Strategy', dated 24th October 2011, was circulated along with a proposal document for two, one-year, honors courses in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, to be delivered in conjunction with the Singapore Institute of Technology, dated 27th October 2011. He welcomed Dr Juliette Hussey and Dr Deirdre Connolly from the Disciplines of Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, in the School of Medicine, to attend for this item.

(a) Global Relations Strategy

Speaking to the memorandum, 'Global Relations Strategy', the Senior Lecturer outlined the vision and the guiding principles behind College's developing global relations strategy to ensure that Trinity is Ireland's university on the world stage. He commented that, in light of such plans, it is necessary to radically rethink what constitutes a Trinity education if the institution is to operate on a global footing. Speaking about the proposal to deliver courses in Singapore he commented that as part of this strategy Trinity intends to establish a footprint in that region.

(b) Course Proposals

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The Senior Lecturer invited Dr Hussey and Dr Connolly to speak to the course proposals.

Dr Hussey provided a brief background to the proposals explaining that the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) is an umbrella institution for the group of polytechnics in Singapore. SIT has approached a number of overseas institutions to discuss partnership options for the delivery of degree options in Singapore for diplomates of the polytechnics. It has identified an increased need for degree attributes in graduates to further develop certain of its allied health services.

The Diploma in Physiotherapy, offered by Nanyang Polytechnic, is currently professionally accredited in Singapore. Its curriculum has been mapped against the four-year course, delivered in Dublin, to identify gaps which have to be filled to bring these students to degree level. Five modules have been developed, four of which will be delivered in Singapore; students undertake the remaining module, 'Advanced Physiotherapy Practice', as part of an overseas immersion programme over a six-week period in Dublin. The modules in Singapore will be delivered by TCD appointed staff in Singapore, TCD visiting staff and SIT staff.

Dr Connolly speaking to the Occupational Therapy section of the proposal explained that four modules have been developed to address the gaps identified in the curriculum of the Diploma in Occupational Therapy, delivered at Nanyang Polytechnic, to enable the award of an honors degree. Three modules are to be delivered in Singapore, those covering Advanced Occupational Therapy Theory, Advanced Practice, Healthcare Development and Delivery. Students on this course would also take a module, Context and Delivery of Practice, through an overseas immersion programme, over a six week period in Dublin where they would observe practice in clinical settings.

The Senior Lecturer noted that the proposed courses would require derogation from Council in relation to the admission regulation which requires students to complete at least two academic years in College in order to complete a degree (§15, F10).

Responding to queries Dr Hussey and Dr Connolly, as relevant, confirmed the following:

- the learning outcomes for the Leadership and Management in Physiotherapy module would be revised;
- the Diploma in Physiotherapy maps well to the four-year degree and students compare very favourably in terms of clinical skills;
- the Diplomas in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy are professionally recognised within Singapore;
- the accrediting body for Occupational Therapists is the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) which accredits both the four-year course and the Diploma in Occupational therapy, therefore, clinical skills for diplomates from Nanyang Polytechnic are of a high level; what is missing from the curriculum is the means for students to develop higher-level thinking skills;
- grading bands used in Singapore are satisfactory and descriptors are similar to those used in Trinity;

- modules delivered in Singapore will help to prepare students for their visit to Ireland and TCD staff visiting Singapore would also help with this aspect;
- supplemental examinations would be available in the subsequent Michaelmas term;
- Physiotherapy placements for TCD/SIT students are to take place at a different time of year from those on the four-year course and, therefore, clinical placement providers and placement supervisors are happy with the intake of additional students;
- Physiotherapy students would be more separate from the main four-year cohort as capacity is an issue, whereas, with smaller numbers expected on the Occupational Therapy course, there will be a higher level of integration;
- students are to be assigned a tutor in Singapore and a pro-tutor whilst in Dublin;
- SIT is responsible for organising Dublin accommodation for students on the overseas immersion programme;
- Occupational Therapy is considering a 'buddy system' whereby TCD/SIT students could avail of the accommodation of four-year Occupational Therapy students who are on placements in different parts of the country;

Concerns were raised in relation to possible increased pressure on student services during the six week overseas immersion programmes and it was commented that this must be adequately provided for in the financial information. Participating students must have a good experience of this initiative otherwise it could damage Trinity's reputation. It was noted that full registration status is required for access to Library holdings and online journals. The Library representative suggested that further discussions take place to discuss Library requirements for students during their six-week visit.

Responding to a query in relation to the appropriateness of awarding a degree for a one-year course, the Senior Lecturer advised that this issue would have to be discussed by Council. He also noted that he had informal discussions with universities in the United Kingdom, with which SIT are in partnership, and the response has been positive in terms of curriculum issues and general involvement.

The Senior Lecturer thanked Dr Hussey and Dr Connolly for providing information about the initiative and the proposed courses.

USC recommended the course proposals to Council, subject to the following:

- (i) The learning outcomes in the module 'Leadership and management in physiotherapy' be revised.
- (ii) The provision of adequate accommodation plans.
- (iii) Adequate costs for support services factored into the finances.
- (iv) The availability of supplemental examinations for the one-year courses must be clarified to ensure parity across the one-year and four-year cohorts.
- (v) The receipt of positive reports from the external reviewers.

UGS/11-12/016 Institutional Review of Trinity College Dublin

A memorandum from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer 'Draft Institutional Self Assessment Report (ISAR)', dated 26th October 2011, was circulated along with the document 'Draft Institutional Self-Assessment Report for the Institutional Review of Universities in Ireland', dated 26th October 2011.

The Senior Lecturer welcomed the Quality Officer to the meeting for this item and noted that she would remain for the next item concerning student evaluations of modules.

Introducing the item, the Assistant Academic Secretary explained that this is the second cycle of institutional reviews; the first being the European University Association (EUA) Quality Review of Universities in Ireland. Four Institutions have already been reviewed under this cycle and Trinity will be visited over four days, by a panel of six reviewers, in March 2012. The purpose of the self-assessment

documentation is to consider the effectiveness of Trinity's processes. She noted that the report has been considered by the Quality Committee and the Steering Group, both of which are chaired by the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer.

The Quality Officer highlighted the fact that the self-assessment report is still being drafted to improve some areas and to balance factual information with more self-reflection. She stated that comments from the USC would help with the drafting process.

The Students' Union Education Officer welcomed the latest version of the report but expressed the opinion that there are gaps remaining. For example, she commented that there is little reflection on problem areas, such as, appeals, the academic year structure and timetabling issues.

Responding to a query, the Senior Lecturer confirmed that a decision regarding the provider of the virtual learning environment is unlikely to be made before the institutional review visit in March. He also noted that appeals will come up as an item at another meeting during the academic year as there are a number of issues to be discussed, such as, tight turnaround times, increasing financial difficulties for students and the need for greater consistency in decisions of courts of first appeal.

Further comments made during the course of the discussion included:

- the lack of English language support for international students should be mentioned;
- there should be more self-reflection in the document;
- there is a need to clarify what is meant by the 'culture' of Trinity College;
- details of internships and professional placements should be captured;
- the effects of the employment control framework and other external constraints should be highlighted.

The Senior Lecturer thanked members for their comments.

UGS/11-12/017 Student Evaluations of Modules

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, 'Student Evaluation of Modules', dated 24th October 2011, was circulated along with the document 'Annual Report on student evaluation of undergraduate and postgraduate modules for the academic year 2010/11', dated September 2011.

Speaking to the documents the Quality Officer noted that the 2010/11 academic year saw the implementation of the online student module evaluation facility. She indicated that while the implementation had been quite successful there are concerns, particularly expressed by the Quality Committee, about the response rate being lower (37%) than for hardcopy evaluations (49%). However, she informed the meeting that the quality and details of additional comments is better. She noted that the report also provides details of the different types of module evaluations conducted in Schools.

She reported that the Quality Committee has endorsed the inclusion of a 'tick-box' option at the beginning of module questionnaires, to help to increase the response rate, to state 'I am satisfied with the organisation of this module including the instruction received and do not need to complete the rest of the questionnaire or make further comment.' She added that students would still be offered the opportunity to comment more fully.

During the discussion on student module evaluation the following points were made:

- there is some difficulty in implementing the use of the online facility in some schools due to a belief that lecturers must explicitly agree to their module being evaluated;
- closing the feedback loop is problematic, especially if the module is evaluated in the second semester;

- notifying new students of changes made on foot of the previous module evaluation would be helpful;
- the 'tick-box' exercise should be adjusted to more neutral wording;
- students receiving multiple e-mails about different module evaluations in one day is not likely to help improve the response rate;
- 'tick-box' responses might increase the response rate but it is the additional comments which are most interesting and useful;
- the number of online surveys presented against Business requires clarification;
- the provision of survey results to schools can be inconsistent.

It was also commented that the student representative system could be more fully utilised in the evaluation of modules whereby class members could feed through their views to their representative for collation. This method would be particularly useful in the case of modules which are delivered by more than one lecturer.

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Quality Officer for attending the meeting.

UGS/11-12/018 Trinity Inclusive Curriculum

This item was deferred due to lack of time.

UGS/11-12/019 Academic Year Structure

A report from the Students' Union Education Officer, 'Proposal for Revision of Academic Year Structure', was circulated.

The Senior Lecturer, noting that there would be a follow-up discussion on this topic at the next USC meeting, invited the Students' Union Education Officer to speak to the document. She noted that the current academic year structure is in its third year and that a certain proportion of College is not happy with the way it works. She cited problems with the tight deadlines around appeals, the intensity of the workload on students, mental health issues for students, the possible rise in the levels of rote learning and question spotting, and the pressures on student services and administration. The Senior Lecturer welcomed this opportunity to discuss some issues of critical importance, and noted that at a recent student forum the Provost had encouraged lecturers to be more imaginative in setting assessments.

In discussing the report the following points were made:

- there is evidence in the first year of Dental Science that the assessments drive learning techniques;
- examinations before Christmas could be just as damaging as rote learning due to the over-examination of students;
- the cause of mental health issues cannot be simply reduced to pressures from the academic year structure;
- Christmas examinations might be used as a useful feedback tool;
- students who have transferred courses would be at a disadvantage in Christmas examinations;
- in some schools there is no clear support for either option - Christmas examinations or annual examinations only;
- the organisation of the curriculum into modules does not necessarily increase the number of examinations;
- Christmas examinations do not suit all disciplines, for example, they would not be suitable for languages;
- within courses, Christmas examinations may be better suited to some years more than others, for example, the freshman years;
- providing examinations on a semesterised basis would require additional resources.

The Students' Union Education Officer was commended for the report by a number of USC members and the Senior Lecturer thanked her for compiling the report, and thanked members for their comments.

UGS/11-12/020 Any other business

- (i) The Senior Lecturer informed the meeting that 10 of the 23 gold medals awarded as part of the Undergraduate Awards of Ireland and Northern Ireland, in October, had gone to Trinity College students. This included one of the first medal recipients in the international category. He congratulated all the students who had taken part and the staff members who had encouraged and supported them.

UGS/11-12/021 Items for noting

The meeting noted the memorandum for the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer to Council, 'Professional and Statutory Body Accreditation', dated 19th September 2011.

signature

date