

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 30th October 2012 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

- Present: Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Patrick Geoghegan (*Chair*)
Dean of Students, Professor Amanda Piesse
Senior Tutor, Professor Clair Laudet
Assistant Academic Secretary, Ms Orla Sheehan
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)
Professor Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music
Professor Jarlath Kileen, School of English
Professor Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Pádraig de Paor, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Benjamin Wold, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Professor Eleanor Denny, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Mary Lee Rhodes, School of Business
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor Michael Shevlin, School of Education
Professor Ivana Bacik, School of Law
Professor Dermot O'Dwyer, School of Engineering
Professor Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor David Chew, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Graham Harper, School of Physics
Professor Ken Mok, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
Professor Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Professor Sharon O'Donnell, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Moray McGowan, Director of TSM
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Mr Daniel Ferrick, Education Officer, Students' Union
Ms Sinead Leydon, Student Representative
Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Developer
Ms Cliona Hannon, Director Trinity Access Programmes
- Apologies: Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, School of Chemistry
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Francis O'Toole, Director of BESS
- In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner; Mr Trevor Peare (Library Representative); and Professor Jane Ohlmeyer, Vice-Provost for Global Relation (for item USC/12-13/020)

The Senior Lecturer advised members that the Vice-Provost for Global Relations would speak to an additional item, not on the agenda, on the Global Relations Strategy.

USC/12-13/018 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd October 2012 where approved.

USC /12-13/019 Matters arising

- i. USC/12-13/013: The Senior Lecturer noted that the feasibility study on admissions gained the support of Council.

- ii. USC/12-13/014: He also noted that the recommendations from the Scholarship Review Working Group were supported by Council and would be presented to Board.
- iii. USC/12-13/015: The Senior Lecturer commented that the terms of reference and membership for the Undergraduate Studies Committee would be circulated to the next meeting of Council.

USC /12-13/020 Global Relations Strategy

The Vice-Provost for Global Relations was welcomed to the meeting. She distributed copies of the Bollywood film 'Ek Tha Tiger', which had been partly filmed at Trinity, as well as the recently published 'Global Relations Strategy'.

Speaking to the document, she explained that there are three main pillars to the Strategy:

- Embedding internationalisation of education and research which includes increasing student mobility out of Trinity, increasing non-EU student recruitment, and building on educational and research collaborations already in place.
- Further development of alumni relations.
- Increasing other fundraising activities.

To help facilitate these objectives, she indicated that a number of key roles had been filled including that of the new Director of Internationalisation, Ms Sinead Ryan, a number of Global Officers to assist schools across College, and a number of Regional Officers responsible for specific geographical areas. The main regions which are being targeted are North America and Canada, and Asia (mainly China and India) along with other niche educational markets in Brazil, Malaysia and Singapore, among others. She noted that College intends to double the numbers of non-EU students entering Trinity over the coming years, which would total approximately 1000 additional students.

Speaking about the Academic Registry, she explained that two-thirds of the former International Office is transferring to that area to provide more integrated administrative services to international students, and would be located in the Biotechnology Building when refurbishments are completed. A Global Room will also be provided in that building for the use and support of international students. She added that the use of support services by international students must be monitored.

She referred to the 'International Student Barometer', a survey of international students on their experiences in higher education institutions and advised that Trinity did not score as highly as expected; certain infrastructural and academic issues were highlighted. To improve in these areas, College may have to alter certain processes, for example, in order to produce the annual examinations timetable as early as possible, students may have to confirm their module choices earlier in the year.

During the discussion it was noted that many non-EU students have high expectations in relation to services. For example, those from North America tend to expect that College accommodation would be available. It is important that expectations are managed through clear communication of what students can expect when they arrive. A number of members commented that the expectations of anxious parents of non-EU students must also be managed and that training in this regard would be helpful. Speaking about embedding internationalisation, it was emphasised by a member that incoming students contribute to the cultural experience of all students, however, there can be barriers to their integration which should be explored.

Responding to a query, the Vice-Provost for Global Relations confirmed that there is a high level of communication between relevant Officers and areas to ensure coherence in activities to support the Strategy. In relation to budgetary incentives she also confirmed that a paper was being drafted in which it would be proposed that 40 per cent of the income generated by schools would be returned to schools via the Faculty Deans.

The Senior Lecturer congratulated the Vice-Provost for Global Relations on the Strategy and on-going global activities, and thanked her for speaking to the Committee.

USC /12-13/021 Forums on Assessment

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, 'Forums on Assessment: the next stage', dated 25th October 2012, was circulated with an enclosed report on the forums. The Senior Lecturer noted that the discussions on assessment practices were facilitated by Dr Ciara O'Farrell, the Senior Academic Developer, in May 2012. Speaking about the links between assessment policies and practice and the Trinity Experience, he commented that it would be beneficial if examiners were allowed to be flexible in assessment practices, provided that the methods were appropriate to the subject areas. He asked the Senior Academic Developer to speak to the report.

Providing an overview, she commented that the purpose behind the meetings was to provide the space for critical reflection on various aspects of assessment and to allow the exchange of information between academics in relation to their knowledge and practices. The approach adopted at the forums was both collegial and critical thus helping to engender ownership of the outcomes by participants. In discussing the possibility of removing end-of-year examinations in a particular year, she noted that many participants felt that this would allow lecturers to focus on the use of assessment *for* learning rather than as a measure simply *of* learning. The formats of the discussions, broadly along Faculty lines, could provide the basis for developing 'communities of assessment' which could be used to further enhance assessment literacy among staff and students. Promoting assessment literacy amongst students should help to encourage deeper learning.

The Senior Lecturer noted that it would be useful if there was an online resource which could be used to share information about assessment practices and methods, and he also suggested the organisation of a symposium during 2013.

The discussion included the following points and suggestions:

- It would be useful if forms of assessment could follow curriculum delivery, for example, through the use of problem based learning.
- Clarification was sought in relation to the purpose of the discussion and it was asked if this was to legitimise the different types of assessments being used or simply to share and discuss practices.
- Setting appropriate supplemental examinations is not always possible where certain learning outcomes cannot be assessed at a repeat session, for example, those related to group work. It is not ideal, where innovative practices are used during the annual session that assessments tend to revert to more traditional types during the supplemental period. It was cautioned that schools must be mindful of equity among students when dealing with issues around supplemental assessments.
- Administrative staff, such as those in the Examinations and Timetables Office, could attend future discussions to see how they might support different assessment types.
- Perhaps certain skills and outcomes could be related to a number of modules so that if students fail in one, they might be able to demonstrate these in another.
- Broader skills could be incorporated into modules and their associated assessments. The outcomes based approach is useful as it looks at skills and not just the content of modules.
- It is important for students to be involved in future discussions.
- Schools and disciplines should take learning outcomes to the next level and map these outcomes to particular assessments to ensure that these are all being assessed. It was commented that this has already happened in a number of courses, especially professional courses.
- Labelling certain academics as champions or innovators within their schools implies that there are non-innovators and this could lead to tension.

The Senior Lecturer noted that he would visit each school, hopefully before the end of Michaelmas term, to discuss matters related to assessments, and graduate skills and attributes. He thanked members for their comments and advised that a document would be brought back to USC in December or early Hilary term which would cover the assessment symposium, emerging themes and barriers to flexible assessment. He noted the need to include students' views on the topic.

USC /12-13/022 Trinity Ambassadors

A memorandum, 'Trinity Ambassadors', from the Senior Lecturer, dated 25th October, was circulated. He advised that an e-mail had been sent to all undergraduate students at the start of October to ask for volunteers to become Trinity Ambassadors, the objective of which was to recruit at least one student from each county in Ireland to appear in a short video piece about their perceptions and experiences of Trinity. These videos will be accessed through an interactive 32 county map of Ireland on a new website, 'Explore Trinity', which is currently under development. Following the request for volunteers, 172 responses were received from students coming from 31 counties. A number of replies were also received from non-EU students which have been forwarded to the Vice-Provost for Global Relations. He said that he hopes this initiative would help to counteract some of the commonly held misconceptions about TCD, for example, that it is elitist and exclusive. He confirmed that 50 students have been selected for the first round of filming.

In discussing particular barriers to student recruitment from Northern Ireland, it was commented that there is a culture of streaming pupils into grammar schools and that many of these schools encourage students to go to particular universities in the United Kingdom. It was also suggested that the additional language requirement and the number of A Level subjects which must be presented may also present barriers.

The Committee discussed possible directions for this project and ideas for future Open Days. It was suggested that:

- The ambassadors could return to their schools to make presentations. It was added that for this to be effective Trinity should target secondary schools which send few entrants to Trinity. Other schools which tend not to send students to Trinity should also be targeted in some way.
- Regional rooms could be set up in a similar way to the Global Room mentioned by the Vice-Provost for Global Relations.
- Open Day activities could be re-thought and should include representation from clubs and societies, as well as information about student supports.
- Trinity Ambassadors could fill the roles of guides employed by the Admissions Office to assist with Open Day.
- Staff members could go back to their own secondary schools.

He thanked members for their ideas and noted that the project would be kept small in the initial stages. Once the website is fully developed he would seek a budget to support the project and perhaps to pay students' expenses for visits to their schools.

USC /12-13/023 Task Group on University Entry and Selection

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, 'Task Group on University Entry and Selection', dated 25th October 2012, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer noted that he is Trinity's representative on the group which is chaired by Dr Philip Nolan, the President from NUI Maynooth. It had been expected initially that this group would publish a report before the end of December 2012, but this timeline is unlikely.

He provided an update in relation to the group's discussions and noted that it is looking at particular issues including the assessment and learning behaviours inherited from second-level, subject choices, and entry routes. He highlighted a method of course coding used in UCD, for admissions purposes, whereby a

number of joint honors law courses use one main CAO code with a varying three digit suffix which changes depending on the additional subject chosen, and queried if it would be workable in Trinity. It was noted that, while it appears to work in UCD, there are dangers associated with this, such as, not being able to manage spikes in numbers on the additional subject. He asked members to consider if Trinity could reduce its number of CAO codes as this may help to ease governmental pressure on the institution.

USC/12-13/024 Any other business

There was no other business.

USC/12-13/025 Items for noting

USC noted and approved the follow items:

(i) The memorandum, 'Provost's Teaching Awards 2012/13', from the Senior Lecturer and the Dean of Graduate Studies, dated 25th October 2012.

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(ii) The memorandum 'Change in course title: Natural Sciences to Science', from the Senior Lecturer, dated 25th October along with correspondence from the Science Course Director, dated 17th October 2012. It was noted that the date of implementation was being explored with the Academic Registry.

signature

date