

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 11th December 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 Claire Laudet
Assistant Academic Secretary, Ms Orla Sheehan
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)
Professor Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music
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 Mary Lee Rhodes, School of Business
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor Ivana Bacik, School of Law
Professor Dermot O'Dwyer, School of Engineering
Professor Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Professor Graham Harper, School of Physics
Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, School of Chemistry
Professor Ken Mok, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Sharon O'Donnell, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Moray McGowan, Director of TSM
Professor Francis O'Toole, Director of BESS
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Mr Daniel Ferrick, Education Officer, Students' Union

Apologies: Professor Jarlath Kileen, School of English
Professor Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Michael Shevlin, School of Education
Professor David Chew, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
Professor Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Ms Sinead Leydon, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner; Mr Trevor Peare (Library Representative); Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Developer; Ms Cliona Hannon, Director Trinity Access Programmes; and Mr Declan Treanor, Director of Disability Service (for item USC/12-13/030).

USC/12-13/026 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 30th October 2012 were approved.

USC/12-13/027 Matters arising

- (i) USC/12-13/021: The Senior Lecturer provided an update on his visits to each school in College noting that he and the Assistant Academic Secretary will have visited 18 by the end of Michaelmas term and would complete the remaining visits early in the New Year.
- (ii) USC/12-13/022: The Senior Lecturer noted that 54 student ambassadors were involved in the Open Day event on 1st December and met with prospective

entrants, as suggested at the last meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee. Further details would be provided under a later agenda item.

- (iii) USC/12-13/023: The Senior Lecturer advised that the 'Task Group on Reform of University Selection and Entry' would be discussed under an item later in the agenda.

USC/12-13/028 GeneSIS Project

A memorandum, 'GeneSIS Project: Module Assessment, Progression and Awards in SITS - Publication of Module and End-of-Year Results', from the GeneSIS Project Assessment Team, dated 4th December 2012, was circulated.

The Senior Lecturer outlined the proposals from the GeneSIS Project Assessment Team contained in the memorandum. Clarification was sought by a committee member in relation to the anonymous examination number and it was confirmed that students receive a different examination number each year. It was commented by another member that when results are released, Tutors should receive reports concerning their tutees in a more intuitive format, for example, it would be useful to be able to filter information about failing students and other non-standard cases.

It was queried by a member why hardcopy results sheets would be required for notice boards and he commented that there would be no reason to publish these by examination number order as this would provide no additional information to students over and above that provided through their portal page. The Senior Lecturer suggested that the proposed publication of anonymous results sheets should relate to merit order only and could be reviewed after the first year.

Some concerns were raised about the new system, especially in its first year of operation, and it was commented that there would be additional checking taking place at a local level in relation to examination data. It was suggested that the examination keyholder files should be sent out to schools and disciplines as a back-up this year.

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The Committee agreed the following:

1. **Release of results to individual students** - At the time of publication each student's results (end-of-year overall results, module and assessment component marks and grades) will be released to the individual student's portal page.
2. **Release of results to staff including tutors**- At the time of publication the same results information that has been released to the individual students will be released to staff, including tutors, via the staff portal page.
3. **Publication of results by 'Class Result List'** - For the 2012/13 academic year the publication of 'Class Result Lists' will continue via the web and by display on notice boards by use of the anonymous examination number. The practice can be reviewed thereafter.
4. **Ordering of students on 'Class Lists'** - Students' results should be ordered by merit on published class results lists for all years.

The meeting also noted the requirements in relation to module ownership and the maintenance of module related data.

USC/12-13/029 University Selection and Entry

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A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, 'Reform of University Selection and Entry', dated 4th December 2012, was circulated along with a briefing note, 'Task Group on Reform of University Selection and Entry', from the Irish Universities Association (IUA) dated 22nd November 2012, and two other documents from the Senior Lecturer, 'Proposed Resolutions to Council on University Selection and Entry' dated 6th December 2012, and 'A New Structure for Admitting Students to Study Two Subjects as part of a Trinity Joint Honours Programme' dated 5th December 2012.

The Senior Lecturer, speaking to the item, updated the Committee on the work of the Task Group on Reform of University Selection and Entry and noted that a particular focus of the group is the reduction of the number of courses for entry to the universities. The Two Subject Moderatorship (TSM) programme, with 178 separate CAO entry codes, has drawn particular criticism from the Minister for Education and Skills, the Department of Education and Skills and from a number of members of the IUA Task Group. He added that these criticisms seem to derive from a misunderstanding about the operation of quotas within TSM as it is presumed quotas are assigned to specific subject combinations rather than to the individual subjects available in the programme.

In an attempt to ward off this pressure it is proposed that the coding structure for TSM is altered and that the programme be re-named, whilst maintaining the course choice structure which works well for Trinity. In tandem, it is proposed that other two subject courses be restructured and come under the new joint honours title. To this end, it is proposed that a working group be established, chaired by the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, which would examine how this could be achieved and consider other developments for the joint honours structure. The Senior Lecturer explained that the first eight resolutions contained in the circulated document would allow a Trinity position to be articulated in the final IUA Task Group document and that the ninth resolution attempts to indicate College's commitment to increasing student numbers from Northern Ireland.

Following a number of questions and comments in relation to operation of the proposed re-coding, the Senior Lecturer explained, in further detail, the suggested coding system for TSM which would involve reducing the 178 entry codes to 25 but with the use of an additional four letter suffix. This would allow entry to specific subject combinations in the same way as is permitted currently. He then brought the meeting through each of the proposed resolutions.

There were varying opinions expressed, a number in favour and others against specific resolutions. The Director of TSM asked for his concerns to be noted regarding the speed with which the proposals were being brought through the committees without time to consider and explore the implications, and without the programme Management Committee having considered the resolutions which are relevant to TSM. Whilst not opposed to change *per se* he stated that he could not support a number of the resolutions as this level of work had not been carried out. The Senior Lecturer invited the Director of TSM to send through a statement which could be read out at the next Council meeting.

Following the discussion members were invited to indicate their support, or otherwise, in relation to each of the proposed resolutions. The following outcomes were recorded:

First Resolution - Following the suggested rewording of 'Junior Freshman' to 'first year' it received unanimous support.

Second Resolution - Received unanimous support.

Third Resolution - There was agreement to alter the first sentence. The resolution received majority support from the meeting but with dissenting opinions expressed.

Fourth Resolution - Received majority support from the meeting but with dissenting opinions expressed.

Fifth Resolution - Received unanimous support.

Sixth Resolution - Received majority support from the meeting but with dissenting opinions expressed.

Seventh Resolution - Received majority support from the meeting but with dissenting opinions expressed.

Eighth Resolution - Received majority support from the meeting but with dissenting opinions expressed.

Ninth Resolution - Received majority support from the meeting but with dissenting opinions expressed.

USC/12-13/030 Examination and Assessment Arrangements for Students with Disabilities

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, 'Examination and Assessment Arrangements for Students with Disabilities', dated 6th December 2012 was circulated along with a document, 'Guidelines for students and staff on the modification of examination and assessment arrangements for students with disabilities', dated December 2012. The Senior Lecturer welcomed the Director of the Disability Service to the meeting.

The Director of the Disability Service explained that these guidelines were last updated in 2008. Since then there has been a move to standardise examination and assessment accommodations in third-level institutions across the sector which has led to the development of a common examination policy by the Disability Advisors Working Network (DAWN). The revised College guidelines have been aligned to the DAWN examination policy and also incorporate changes made necessary by amendments to the General Regulations of the University Calendar 2012/13.

There were some minor changes suggested by members and it was noted that the final version of the guidelines document would be circulated at the next meeting of USC as an item for noting.

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Director of the Disability Service and congratulated him on the work being carried out in this area.

USC/12-13/031 Conversion of Grades for Outgoing Exchange Students

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, 'Conversion of Grades for Outgoing Students on Erasmus and Other Exchanges', dated 5th December 2012, was circulated with attached grade conversion tables.

It was noted that the circulated conversion tables had been adapted from those in use in TSM. In discussing the scales some problems were pointed out in relation to the conversion of marks from French and German institutions, and it was commented by a member that there are different marking scales and practices in use across different institutions within the same country, making it impossible to develop a standardised conversion table on a country-by-country basis for all courses in Trinity.

The Senior Lecturer advised that he would send the circulated document and the minute of the USC discussion to Professor Daniel Faas who is chairing a task force which is examining barriers to student mobility.

USC/12-13/032 Trinity Explore

A memorandum, 'Trinity Explore', dated 5th December 2012 was circulated. Introducing the item, the Senior Lecturer displayed an early version of the Trinity Explore website ahead of its launch in January 2013. He noted that student ambassadors had been recruited from every county in Ireland and he played a sample of the recorded video pieces in which the ambassadors talk about their experiences and perceptions of Trinity.

He noted that the 54 volunteer ambassadors, grouped into their respective provinces, had assisted with Open Day by being available in the GMB to talk to prospective students at scheduled times.

A number of suggestions were made in relation to additional content for the website, expanding the student ambassador scheme and observations were made about the Open Day event in 2012. The Senior Lecturer commented that what had been achieved so far had been done with very modest funds. He confirmed that he hoped to grow the initiative in future years but that in order to do so a dedicated budget would be required. He confirmed that he would

seek this funding and the USC supported the further development of the scheme.

USC/12-13/033 Any other business

(i) The Senior Lecturer drew the attention of the meeting to the events planned for the 20th anniversary of the Trinity Access Programmes, and copies of '2020 Vision, The Trinity Access Programmes Strategic Plan to 2020' were distributed to members.

(ii) The Dean of Students informed the Committee of the 'Santa Dash' taking place on 12th December to raise funds for the Society of St Vincent de Paul. She encouraged members to participate in, and to promote, the event.

USC/12-13/034 Items for noting

USC noted the following items:

(i) Memorandum, 'Trinity College Virtual Learning Environment: Blackboard Learn 9.1 concerning the VLE' from the eLearning Manager (CAPSL), dated 30th November 2012.

(ii) Document, 'Proposed events for the 20th anniversary of TAP, 2013' from the Director of the Trinity Access Programmes, dated 5th December 2012.

signature

date