



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

XX = Council relevance

A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 26 January 2016 at 2.15pm in the Large Conference Room, O'Reilly Institute

- Present: Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, Professor Gillian Martin (*Chair*)
 Ms Molly Kenny, Education Officer, Students' Union
 Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
 Dean of Students, Professor Kevin O'Kelly
 Senior Tutor, Professor Claire Laudet
 Professor Philip Coleman, School of English
 Professor David Wilkins, School of Mathematics
 Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
 Professor Elaine Moriarty, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
 Professor Mike Brady, School of Computer Science and Statistics
 Professor Mary-Lee Rhodes, School of Business
 Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
 Professor Sarah Smyth, Director of TSM
 Professor Ciaran Simms, School of Engineering
 Professor Michael Bridge, School of Chemistry
 Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science
 Professor Fáinche Ryan, Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology
 Professor Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
 Professor James Hanrahan, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
 Professor Eric Weitz, School of Drama, Film and Music
 Professor Jane Farrar, School of Genetics and Microbiology
 Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
 Professor Des Ryan, School of Law
 Professor Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities
 Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education
 Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Developer
 Ms Sinéad Baker, Student Representative
- Apologies: Professor Robbie Gilligan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
 Professor Kevin Devine, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education
 Professor Howard Smith, School of Psychology
 Professor Kevin Conlon, School of Medicine
 Professor Imelda Coyne, School of Nursing and Midwifery
 Professor Charles Patterson, School of Physics
 Library Representative, Mr David Mockler
 Ms Cliona Hannon, Director, Trinity Access Programmes
- In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan; Ms Sarah Grimson and Ms Kathleen O'Toole-Brennan for item USC/15-16/116; Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Trinity Teaching and Learning for item USC/15-16/117

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer welcomed Professor Philip Coleman who was acting as Interim Director of Teaching and Learning in the School of English, and Peter Cherry who was acting as Interim Director of Teaching and Learning in the School of Histories and Humanities, whilst the Directors of Teaching and Learning were on sabbatical leave. She also welcomed Professor Eric Weitz, Director of Teaching and Learning in the School of Drama, Film and Music, and informed the Committee that the new Library Representative was Mr David Mockler.

USC/15-16/111 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8 December 2015 were approved.

USC/15-16/112 Matters arising

USC/15-16/087ii At the Council meeting of 13 January 2016, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences addressed the concerns regarding the staffing structure for the B.A. (Mod.) in Middle Eastern and European Languages and Cultures. Council subsequently approved the proposal.

USC/15-16/089 The Student Complaints Procedure had been discussed at Council and some amendments suggested. The final version will be circulated under matters arising at the next meeting of Council for noting and approval. In response to a query, the Academic Secretary noted that the procedure will be discussed at the School Administrators Forum on 3 February 2016.

USC/15-16/092 The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer reported that 88% of the backlog of student cases had been resolved by 22nd January, and it was anticipated that the remainder would be resolved by the end of January. She commended the hard work of the Student Cases Team in resolving the backlog. It was noted that in certain cases the timing of the resolutions had created an issue for students and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer advised that tutors should contact the Student Cases Team about these matters. A new team comprising staff from the current Student Cases Team and the Student Records Team would be in place from 1 February 2016 and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer would request that Academic Registry inform tutors of this. A committee member acknowledged the progress and thanked the Senior Lecturer for her work on this.

USC/15-16/097 The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer outlined that the Working Group on RPL would shortly circulate a survey to Directors of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning with the purpose of ascertaining current practices relating to RPL in College. She asked that Directors circulate the survey within their schools and departments.

USC/15-16/105 The proposal for the International Foundation Programme had been approved by Council at its meeting of 13 January 2016.

USC/15-16/106 The proposal for the Module in Contemporary Global Politics (Brown Summer Module) had been approved by Council at its meeting of 13 January 2016.

USC/15-16/107 The recommendations of the Appeals Working Group had been approved at Council. Changes suggested by USC members had been integrated into the document that went to Council. Any further changes suggested by Council members would also be integrated. An implementation plan would shortly be put in place and communication with stakeholders would begin in the coming weeks.

USC/15-16/113 Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer's Report**Trinity Education Project**

A document titled 'Update on Education Project: Strand 2 Curriculum Principles and Architecture, Draft Curriculum Principles for Discussion' had been circulated. The Vice-Provost had spoken to the document at the Council meeting of 13 January 2016. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer provided an update on the Project. She reported that work on both the graduate attributes and their underpinning curriculum principles was still being carried out and that these would continue to evolve.

Consultation was ongoing and, to date, information sessions on the graduate attributes had taken place with the College community, members of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and with employers. The Course Director of TSM advised that six meetings would take place in the following two weeks for members of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. It was noted that the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education had also been consulting with colleagues on the proposed attributes. A slide was displayed, and would subsequently be emailed to members, that detailed the schedule of themed fora for engagement with the College community on the different strands. Members were encouraged to attend the fora and to inform members of their schools.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer and Ms Fedelma McNamara had visited all schools that had professionally accredited programmes to discuss the impact of the requirements of accrediting bodies on the content and structure of degree programmes.

In the following discussion, members raised a concern regarding the funding of 'wet' research projects and other lab-based projects: these involved high costs that were currently funded by research grants or 'unarticulated funding'. It was noted that the number of lab-based projects being undertaken had diminished, not just in Science disciplines, but also in Engineering disciplines, due to the funding constraints and it was felt that a funding stream should be formalised for this going forward. A member requested that it be specified under the TEP that the additional funding necessary to fulfil the Project's curriculum requirements would be provided; including costs to cover staff training and associated staff time.

The Director of Teaching and Learning in the School of Mathematics explained that it would not be possible to implement the draft TEP guidelines in the mathematics or theoretical physics curricula due to the chronological nature of the subject matter: current research would not be taught until the postgraduate years. In response, it was emphasised that the purpose of the research component was to foster an inquiring mind-set and research mentality. It would be used to showcase students' skills and should be defined by each discipline as appropriate.

A further comment was raised with regard to the high number of postgraduate students that would be required to assist undergraduates in certain areas with their research projects, and how there may not be sufficient availability on postgraduate programmes.

The Dean of Students spoke about the emphasis on co-curricular activities and the need to identify ways of integrating these into the learning environment for over 3,000 incoming students. He reported on changes in the S2S programme, specifically, how it was developing from a mentoring initiative into a peer-assisted learning programme. It was suggested that a presentation by the head of the programme would be delivered to a future meeting of USC. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer noted that it might be useful to draw on the experiences of the peer learning scheme which had existed for many years in the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies.

Northern Ireland (NI) Engagement Programme

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer would shortly update Council on developments in the Northern Ireland Engagement Programme (NIEP). College has continued to engage with schools across NI and to attend Guidance Counsellor fairs. On Open Day, students, parents and teachers from NI had been invited to attend the Global Room, where a rolling information session had taken place. Over 500 visitors had called in over the course of the day.

The first intake of students through the Northern Ireland Feasibility Study had been admitted in 2015. The number of applications and enrolments of NI students in 2015/16, and applications and enrolments for the last five years were presented. Applications had increased from 604 in 2014/15 to 754 in 2015/16. A total of 244 offers were made: 176 via the standard route and 68 via the Feasibility Study. Offers were accepted by 176 applicants - 74 standard acceptances and 33 acceptances from the Study. This represented a 44% acceptance rate which would be significantly lower than within the Leaving Certificate cohort. A total of 90 NI students registered and this represented 3% of the overall CAO intake in 2015/16. It was noted that College should focus attention on the conversion of offers to acceptances and, ultimately, to registrations, recognising that, unlike UK universities, Trinity is not in a position to make conditional offers. A member queried whether the timing of offers from UK universities compared to CAO of Trinity was impacting on acceptances. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer responded that this gap had, in fact, narrowed significantly.

College will monitor the impact of the recalibration of the A-Level scoring scheme on the number of applications from NI, following the CAO closing date. The new scoring scheme will be operational for applicants seeking entry in 2016-17 and makes it easier for applicants presenting with 3 A-Levels to access higher points courses. Members were advised that they will, in the coming months, be asked to consider whether the Feasibility Study should continue for another year. A more detailed report will be brought to a future meeting of USC.

USC/15-16/114 Review of Entrance Exhibition award

A briefing document from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, dated 21 January 2016, had been circulated. Entrance Exhibitions were awarded to EU students who achieved 560 points or above (excluding the bonus points for mathematics) and registered on a full-time undergraduate degree programme. The award was valued by recipients and their schools for its prestige and this was promoted by the formal reception in the Dining Hall and the roll call of the students' names.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer highlighted that the current scheme did not take into account the context of the achievement of a student attaining the points: how it might be easier to achieve this level of points in certain types of second-level schools than in others. USC members were asked to consider the three questions outlined in the covering memorandum:

- (i) Should we continue to reward what are we currently rewarding with the Entrance Exhibitions?
if not
- (ii) What might we want to reward with the Entrance Exhibition awards?
- (iii) Which alternative selection mechanisms might be considered that seek to reflect the context of achievement and the increasing diversity of our UG intake?

She referred to possible areas for consideration, including:

- the use of relative performance rank (RPR);
- the review of the Sizarship scheme;
- the development of a new entrance award to reflect the increasing diversity of the student body and the different entry routes.

She also noted that if an alternative system were to be put in place, it would need to be equitable, fair, transparent, straightforward to administer, and cost-effective.

The meeting considered the value of RPR, whereby Trinity students who had achieved the highest points in their school would be rewarded. RPR would involve a substantial amount of work by the CAO and permission would need to be sought from the State Examinations Commission. Some members noted that the usefulness of RPR

was as yet unproven and that we should wait until there was further data available on this through the Trinity Admissions Feasibility Study.

The data in the briefing document showed that the profile of Entrance Exhibitioners was largely in line with College's undergraduate intake in terms of fee paying vs non-fee paying schools, gender, and location. Some members believed that the current system should not be changed unless it were to be shown that a certain group or groups were disadvantaged by the scheme.

Other comments from the discussion included:

- College should identify and reach out to those schools that do not traditionally send Entrance Exhibitioners to Trinity;
- the awards could be based on the highest entry points per Trinity course;
- awards could be given to students entering College through different access routes on a pro-rata basis;
- we should consider a system similar to that in UCD whereby a plaque or something similar would be provided to schools that send an Entrance Exhibitioner;
- consideration could be given to not awarding the book token, but continuing the reception, recognising the value of the Exhibitions as a recruiting tool;
- exploration of how to increase the number of Sizars;
- College could consider putting in place an award for academic excellence for non-EU students.
- the issue of free Commons for Sizars might be looked at in light of the experience with another College award whereby some recipients were more comfortable with attending other food outlets in College rather than availing of free Commons.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked members for their input and invited further comments to be sent to her by email (senior.lecturer@tcd.ie).

USC/15-16/115 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2014/15 - Faculty Report

The ISSE Faculty Report 2014/15 had been circulated. The Dean of Students spoke to the report and noted that the response rate had increased to 23% from 16% in the previous year and that this increase was across all three cohorts. The higher response rate would improve the validity of the data received.

The overall institutional-level report was available, but it was important that the data be disseminated at a more local level so that schools could address specific issues relating to their courses. It was noted that it might be possible to prepare some reports at school-level and the Academic Secretary would speak with the Quality Office in this regard. A member requested whether the faculty and school reports could include sectoral-level data for comparative purposes. School-level reports would allow targeted responses and actions by a school, specifically tailored towards its cohorts. It was mentioned, however, that data may not be meaningful in schools with a small number of students, and also that certain schools may not align exactly to the subject codes used in the survey.

The Dean highlighted how the ISSE report was a very rich data source that College should use in order to ensure it reacted to the most important and relevant issues for students. He believed that disciplines should be asked to demonstrate how they have responded to the results and what actions were taken, whether through reporting at Council or USC. In response to a query on what changes had been implemented following previous surveys, it was noted that a number of positive changes had been made both College-wide and within individual schools. In addition, it was confirmed that each faculty presented an annual quality report to Council, which addressed ISSE issues.

In response to a query about how the ISSE report fed into the overall quality assurance processes in College, the Dean noted that the survey was run by the HEA and was a mandatory exercise for College.

The survey for 2016 would be open in February and March and members were asked to encourage students to complete it. The survey would use the same indices as previous years, but the number of questions had been reduced.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer requested that all schools receive a copy of the reports for discussion at Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committees. She thanked the Dean of Students for presenting this item to the Committee.

USC/15-16/116 Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) Foundation Course

A memorandum from the Academic Secretary, dated 21 January 2016, together with a proposal from TAP, had been circulated. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer welcomed Ms Sarah Grimson and Ms Kathleen O'Toole-Brennan, TAP, to the meeting to present this item.

The proposal involved the review and renewal of the TAP Foundation course to enable the alignment of its proposed special purpose award, the Certificate in Foundation Studies for Higher Education, to Level 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The course would carry 60 ECTS credits and would replace the two existing awards (young adults and mature students). A copy of the external review of the Foundation Course had been circulated as an appendix to the proposal and Ms Grimson highlighted the positive feedback that had been received from the reviewers.

The TAP Foundation course was an alternative admissions route to Trinity that aimed to provide students who, for social or economic reasons, may not be able to progress directly to undergraduate studies, with the necessary academic and personal preparation. The course constituted up to a quarter of the annual cohort who progressed to Trinity through TAP alternative entry routes, representing a vital element in achieving the 25% target in the College Strategic Plan for students from under-represented groups. Each year, 25 young adults and 25 mature students were admitted. Since 2009, 93% of young adult students and 73% of mature students had completed the course. Of these, 96% of young adults and 90% of mature students had progressed to a degree course in Trinity.

The existing learning outcomes had been slightly adjusted to align with the NFQ level descriptors. Students would choose to focus on one of four academic streams that would prepare them for entry onto degree programmes in specific subject areas: Sciences, Combined Sciences/Social Sciences/Arts, Social Sciences, and Arts. The course also comprised core modules that focused on developing study and academic writing skills. Students would take all modules in the first term and would then choose, with guidance, the stream they wished to follow. A minimum mark of 40% was required to pass the course, however a minimum of 50% was required to progress to degree courses in Trinity.

The course was currently overseen by the TAP Steering Committee and from the 2016/17 academic year, academic oversight would come under the School of Education. The accreditation of the award would make it nationally recognised, thereby enhancing the opportunities for student progression and hopefully lending weight to the effort to secure eligibility for students grants. In response to a query, Ms Grimson explained that the School of Education agreed to provide academic oversight for the course, and that this was to ensure quality assurance of the programme.

The proposers answered a small number of questions from members. One member

suggested that College could consider awarding excellence in the Foundation Course by way of an Entrance Exhibition.

- XX** USC supported the proposal to proceed to external review and subsequently to Council.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked Ms Grimson and Ms O'Toole-Brennan.

- USC/15-16/117** **Uses of Progression Codes Indicating Compensation or Aggregation in 2014/15**
A document outlining the uses of progression codes indicating compensation or aggregation in 2014/15 was circulated together with a memorandum from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, dated 21 January 2016.

This matter had previously arisen at USC when it had been discussed whether the end-of-year result should differentiate between students who had passed by compensation and those who had passed outright. It had come to light that there were differing practices across College.

Ms Sorcha De Brunner was welcomed to the meeting to present the analysis that she had carried out. Ms De Brunner had analysed the annual, supplemental and special results obtained by all undergraduate students in 2014/15. Where progression (PIT) codes had mentioned compensation or aggregation, these were extracted to find out the number of published results which indicated compensation, and the number that did not. The results presented were at the overall course year level rather than at the subject-level. She reported that in the majority of instances where compensation had occurred, this was not indicated in the published result.

A member requested a breakdown on how many of the results indicating that a student had passed by compensation, were in degree years vs non-degree years. It was noted that in TSM, the end-of-year published result did not indicate that a student had passed by compensation when publishing in degree years; but this information was published in non-degree years. A number of members agreed that it should remain visible where students have passed by compensation at the module level, but not necessarily in the overall end-of-year result. Further, a member emphasised the difference between the short PIT code, the function of which is mainly to enable the system to work properly, and the corresponding result published on transcripts and the student portal. The current situation attests to the way in which each programme specified its preference at the time of set up.

Directors were asked to bring this data to their schools and departments for discussion, in particular, in relation to the question of whether the published end-of-year result should distinguish between students who passed outright and those who passed by compensation/aggregation. Additional data could be requested if necessary from Ms De Brunner (debrunns@tcd.ie). This issue will be discussed further at a future meeting of USC.

- USC/15-16/118** **Any other business**

- A policy outlining the approval process for new modules would be brought to USC.
- A brief discussion took place about the student complaints procedure.

- USC/15-16/119** **Items for noting**

There were no items for noting.