



**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 13 September 2016 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.**

Present: Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, Professor Gillian Martin (*Chair*)  
 Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan  
 Senior Tutor, Professor Aidan Seery  
 Dean of Students, Professor Kevin O'Kelly  
 Professor Elaine Moriarty, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
 Professor Sarah Smyth, Director of TSM  
 Professor Alan O'Connor, School of Engineering  
 Professor Cathriona Russell, School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology  
 Professor Brian Brewer, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies  
 Professor Eric Weitz, School of Drama, Film and Music  
 Professor Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities  
 Professor David Prendergast, School of Law  
 Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
 Professor Louis Brennan, School of Business  
 Professor Kevin Mitchell, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education  
 Professor Kevin Conlon, School of Medicine  
 Professor Paschalis Karageorgis, School of Mathematics  
 Professor Imelda Coyne, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
 Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education  
 Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
 Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences  
 Professor Michael Bridge, School of Chemistry  
 Professor Elizabeth Nixon, School of Psychology  
 Professor Frank Wellmer, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
 Professor Charles Patterson, School of Physics  
 Mr Dale Whelehan, Education Officer, Students' Union  
 Mr Colm O'Halloran, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
 Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences  
 Professor Robbie Gilligan, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
 Professor Mike Brady, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
 Professor Jarlath Killeen, School of English

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan; Ms Sióbhán Dunne, Library Representative; Dr Alison Oldam, Director of Student Services; Professor Chris Morash, Vice-Provost, for item USC/16-17/003; Ms Fedelma McNamara, Trinity Education Project, for items USC/16-17/003 and USC/16-17/004

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The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer welcomed new members to the Committee and welcomed back continuing members.

Meeting items were taken in a different order to the agenda: items 3 and 4 regarding the TEP were taken prior to items 1 and 2.

**USC/16-17/001 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 24 May 2016 were approved.

**USC/16-17/002 Matters arising**

**USC/15-16/142** The Level 5 Certificate in Arts, Science and Inclusive Applied Practice had been approved by Council on 29 June 2016.

**USC/15-16/154** The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2014/15 was being finalised. It would proceed to Council and subsequently return to USC for noting.

**USC/15-16/155** The Calendar part II 2016/17 was available online. The possibility of carrying out the Calendar changes process at an earlier stage in the academic year had been investigated. Due to the interconnectedness of the School entries, the Calendar changes process was reliant on returns from all Schools being received; it was not efficient to approach the changes in a piece-meal fashion. Also, as many Schools were still planning in December, it would not be possible to commence the process any earlier. Schools were encouraged to submit their entries by the deadline of end January/start of February.

**USC/15-16/156** The Trinity/Intel agreement had been approved by Council on 29 June 2016.

**USC/15-16/157** Council had approved the extension of the Trinity Admissions Feasibility Study (TAFS) for a further year. Under the Study, 10 places were available in Law, 10 in History, and 5 in Ancient Medieval History and Culture (AMHC). By 13 September 2016, offers had been accepted by 8 students in Law, with a further 2 offers remaining; 7 students in History, with a further 2 offers remaining; and 3 students in Ancient Medieval History and Culture with a further 2 offers. In 2015/16, 21 students had been admitted through TAFS.

**USC/15-16/158** Council had approved the extension of the Northern Ireland Feasibility Study for a further year. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer provided a summary of the Feasibility Study to inform new members. She reported that 292 offers were made to students from Northern Ireland in 2016/17. Of these, 244 were made via the standard route and 48 were via the Feasibility Study. As of the previous week, 102 students had accepted a place; 79 were via the standard route and 23 via the Feasibility Study. The low acceptance rate and the challenge of converting offers to acceptances and registrations were noted.

In response to a query regarding the impact of Brexit on admission rates for Northern Irish students, the Senior Lecturer referred to a statement issued by the IUA on behalf of the universities which had confirmed that UK students currently enrolled and those entering in 2016 would be subject to the same fees as other EU students for the duration of their degree. The HEA, IUA and other relevant bodies were meeting to consider what Brexit would mean for Higher Education generally and the committee would be kept up to date on developments.

**USC/15-16/162** The Director of Student Services responded to a query from a member at a previous meeting regarding responsibility for providing transcripts for returning Erasmus students. She outlined that Academic Registry had responsibility for providing transcripts for students from some Schools, whilst other Schools had assumed this responsibility for their returning Erasmus students. This was in line with the pattern of responsibility for other students. She explained that the Academic Registry transcripts were high-level, and

that more detailed transcripts were the responsibility of Schools. Details on the Schools covered by Academic Registry can be found on the website:  
<https://www.tcd.ie/academicregistry/transcripts/>

### **USC/16-17/003 Update on the Trinity Education Project (TEP)**

The Vice-Provost was welcomed to the meeting for this item. He emphasised the importance of the input of Directors of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning in this phase of the project and how much he was looking forward to working with USC on TEP. The Vice-Provost pointed out that the approach to TEP to date had been high-level and conceptual and had largely stemmed from the top and filtered downwards. He advised that the next stage would take a bottom-up approach where teaching staff would look at how they teach and what the student experience was like. Through this approach, best practice would be harnessed and channelled into forms that could be used throughout the University.

The Vice-Provost reported that the process to appoint Trinity Education Fellows was nearing sign-off. There would be approximately six Fellows and they would be assigned to work with Schools to develop and embed the principles of TEP. The Education Fellows would be familiar with the curricula of the Schools with which they were working and would be in a position to offer advice on identifying and choosing approved modules that would complement and enhance a programme.

The Vice-Provost stressed the importance of working with students and maintaining a student perspective. TEP should focus on what a programme looked like for a Junior Freshman and how students would navigate through the pathways in their course.

The Vice-Provost agreed with a member who highlighted the importance of changing the current assessment procedures in order to reduce the number of assessments. He also agreed with the importance of safeguarding the space that would be built into the timetable under the approved Academic Year Structure (AYS). He further noted the need to approach assessments as a process of learning, rather than just to measure learning, and drew attention to the difficulties that this could pose for incoming students who were used to the assessment processes in the second-level system.

A member commented that Trinity must retain some structure around the new level of flexibility that would be achieved under TEP. The Vice-Provost confirmed that structure would be maintained and noted how the programmes would still be discipline-based, but would offer students some choice around which pathways to follow.

It was agreed that the current timetabling system impacted flexibility. The Vice-Provost noted that a fixed timetable would need to come from the top down and would have to be road-tested prior to being rolled out across College.

In response to a comment from a member regarding the half-day free of lecturers that had been built into a previous iteration of the Academic Year Structure, the Senior Lecturer explained that an analysis of the distribution of teaching had been carried out and had demonstrated that the half-day would have had significant consequences for scheduling of laboratory sessions, even taking into consideration the inclusion of a twelfth teaching and learning week.

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Vice-Provost for speaking to the Committee. The Vice-Provost withdrew from the meeting.

**USC/16-17/004 Trinity Education Project - Update on decisions taken by Council and Planning for Implementation**

The following documents that had been previously discussed by Council were circulated:

a) Graduate Attributes, b) Proposals for Approval, c) Academic Year Structure (AYS).

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer advised members that at its meeting of 8 June 2016, Council had approved the common programme architecture, the Science course architecture, the professional pathway, the clinical architecture; the curriculum principles; and the graduate attributes.

She also provided an update on the status of the AYS. Two options had been brought to Council on 8 June 2016 and Council had requested that three specific issues be addressed, specifically:

1. Management and achievement of the cultural change to implement successfully one week of formal examinations at the end of each semester.
2. The possibility of reducing the results/marking period by one week in Trinity Term.
3. The practicalities of introducing an afternoon in each teaching week free from timetabled classes.

In light of the information presented, Option 2 was recommended to an extraordinary meeting of Council on 29 June 2016. After discussion, this option was approved by Council.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer advised that the approved version of the AYS included elements that would require statutory change and would, therefore, need approval from the Fellows. She also reminded members that a robust discussion on the AYS and how it related to the Scholarship examination had taken place at the May meeting of USC and she agreed to bring these comments to the next meeting of the Central Scholarship Committee.

The Project Manager of TEP attended the meeting for the items relating to the TEP. She advised that the project was moving into phase 3 – planning for implementation. This was a 2-year phase. A draft structure for this phase, involving 5 proposed strands/groups would be presented to the Project Steering Committee on 15 September 2016. Approval to convene the groups would be sought from the Steering Committee and the precise membership of the groups would be subsequently finalised should approval be received.

She brought the Committee through a slide that displayed the 5 proposed strands/groups and highlighted the connection between them. She noted that some of the work in the first strand, including entry and exit routes, had already commenced.

The bulk of the work would take place within strand 1 and this would require the greatest input from USC members. The Project Manager displayed a more detailed slide that outlined the specific elements in strand 1 as follows: enabling architecture; entry routes, pathways, subject combinations; progression and awards; assessment; and enabling architecture from a systems perspective. The TEP and the Trinity Education Fellows (if approved) would work with Schools on these elements and on developing an implementation plan.

A discussion on the entry routes ensued. The importance of determining Trinity's entry routes and moderatorships as a matter of urgency was noted. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer agreed on the importance of expediting these decisions and noted, in relation to Science, that new moderatorships should be looked at as a package.

She emphasised that potential applicants seeking entry in 2018 would require accurate information in order to make their subject choices.

The Trinity Open Day and some individual School Open Days would take place over the coming months and it was pointed out that fifth-year students attend these events and would be looking ahead to third-level entry in 2018. It was noted that detailed information on the reconfigured courses would not be available for these events. The TEP Project Manager indicated that a short summary of TEP would be prepared to outline to students what they could expect in 2018/19. A member highlighted the importance of not increasing entry requirements following communication of these to the potential applicants. It was noted that for a number of years after implementation of the TEP, the old and new structures would run in parallel and that this would require careful management.

The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education updated the meeting on the Science Education Working Group that had been in place for a year. The group had been considering the restructuring of the Science course (TR071) and folding in of the associated direct entry courses in light of TEP and the review of the Science course. The review had amongst other things identified the proliferation of moderatorships and the new structures would include a reduction in this number.

The Science course would be split into three streams. The names for the streams had not been finalised, but at the time of the meeting they were: Physical and Chemical Sciences, Biological and Biomedical Sciences, and Geography and Geosciences. Each of the current direct entry courses would be folded into one of these streams. However, two of the direct entry courses, namely Nanoscience, Physics and Chemistry of Advanced Materials, and Human Genetics, were in the process of making a case to remain as direct entry courses.

The Associate Dean commented how the new streams would bring more predictability into the system and increase the chances of students being able to pursue their chosen moderatorship. He explained that the system that was currently in place was streamed in so far as it involved students choosing subjects in the first year that were pre-requisites for later years. He observed that there was a tension between flexibility and offering choice; the more choices that students were given earlier in the course, the less flexibility they would have in the later stages of the course.

Three sub-committees had been established to work out the detailed structures within each of the streams. Courses would include an emphasis on opportunities for breadth and the teaching of mathematical, statistical and computational skills would be revised.

The Associate Dean emphasised the importance of prospective students knowing which moderatorships would be offered. He noted that due to the timing of the decisions on the moderatorships, Trinity would lose out on the opportunity to market the courses to students in this academic year.

He also advised that it would be possible for students to transfer between courses, but that this would not be built in as specific pathways as this would negate the point of having discrete courses and interfere with the predictability of student numbers on each stream. He further noted that the revised structures may result in a loss of flexibility in relation to some subject choices, but would open up other choices.

In response to a query on flexibility in the common architecture, the Senior Lecturer advised that the Senior Freshman year was considered as the pivot year and that a student on a single-honors pathway could take up another subject in that year. If the student

continued in that subject and collected the required number of credit at the correct levels, they could exit with a single-honors with minor award. The issue of subject choice and which subjects it would be possible to combine would require decisions in the coming year.

A member sought advice through the Chair on how to proceed with the preparation of their programme's accreditation document that was currently underway. The Senior Lecturer advised that the document should flag that changes would take place under TEP, including the requirement that the programme would enable 30 credits of breadth over the four years, at a time of the programme's choosing. The member would draft the document and send it to the TEP Project Manager for approval.

The Senior Lecturer concluded the discussion by noting that the TEP would be included as a standing item on the agenda for USC meetings. She thanked the TEP Project Manager, who subsequently withdrew from the meeting.

In advance of the meeting, the Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning in the School of English had requested that the minutes note that the School had not received a satisfactory response to the detailed responses it had sent with regard to all TEP proposals. Furthermore the School remained unconvinced by the arguments put forward in favour of the project.

## **USC/16-17/005 Chair's Report**

### **Plagiarism recording and reporting procedures**

The Academic Registry had issued communication in May 2016 outlining that the functionality to record levels of plagiarism was live in SITS. A second communication was about to be issued, advising that SITS functionality now included access to reports for defined stakeholders. Students would be able to view the level of plagiarism recorded against them in relation to a particular module.

She explained that where there was an alleged case of plagiarism against a student and a summary procedure was initiated, it was necessary to determine whether the student had a previous case of plagiarism recorded against them. Various stakeholders, including the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, the Senior Tutor, the Junior Dean, Tutors (for their own chamber) and School Progression Managers had now been provided with different levels of access to reports. It had not been possible to provide reporting or viewing access to Directors of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning (DUTLs). It was noted that the role of School Progression Manager was usually held by a School Administrator, but that this may differ in some Schools and programmes. Each School/programme should, therefore, ensure that they identified the relevant person in their area who could provide the DUTL with this information when required.

Over the past year, it had been noticed that the level of information provided to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer or Dean of Graduate Studies on the summary procedures varied greatly across cases and that, in the absence of information, it was sometimes difficult to make a determination on the appropriateness of the proposed penalty. To address this issue, a template for minuting the summary procedure had been developed. This would shortly be sent to stakeholders and it was hoped that it would help to ensure consistency in the information provided.

XX

**Legacy Issue regarding the new Leaving Certificate Grading Bands**Grading system

In the previous academic year, on the basis of discussions by the Task Group on the Reform of University Selection and Entry (TGRUSE), the third level sector had agreed a new common points scale for incoming students in 2017.

The Chair of TGRUSE had recently circulated communication identifying a legacy issue which had emerged as a consequence of the new grading system: this related to the current HE grade and whether it should be accepted for matriculation purposes. The issue would only affect students who wished to apply for entry in 2017, but were seeking to matriculate on the basis of results achieved in 2016 or before.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer displayed slides with the current and new grading bands and the agreed Trinity matriculation requirements for 2017. The current matriculation requirements were 3 Higher C3 grades (55-59) and 3 Passes (OD3 or HD3) (40-44). Within the context of approving the new points system in September 2016, the new matriculation requirements for Trinity had been agreed as 3 H5 grades (50<60) and 3 O6 (40<50)/H7 grades (30<40). The mapping had also been agreed by other HEIs. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer reminded members that the new grading bands covered 10 marks as against the current 5 marks.

The issue for Trinity and other HEIs was whether to accept the old HE (25-39) for matriculation purposes in relation to this legacy cohort. The HE partly overlapped with the new H7 grade (30<40), which was being accepted across the sector for matriculation purposes. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer also drew attention to a further legacy issue: specifically, the mapping of the current HD1 (50-54) grade to the new H5 (50<60), meaning that a student seeking to matriculate in 2017 on the basis of 2016 results could fulfil the requirement for three honours grades by presenting three D1 grades.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer noted that she had discussed the issue with the Admissions Officer and the Vice-Provost and they had agreed that the risk to Trinity was minimal due to the fact that matriculation constituted a minimum entry standard (190 points): students who matriculated still had to achieve the points requirements for the course (350 points was the lowest entry level in 2016) and, in addition, had to fulfil minimum subject requirements for many courses. In the mapping of current subject specific requirements to the new grading bands, the requirements had, in fact, been revised upwards in a number of subjects where the current grade bands straddled two of the new grade bands in order to compensate for the H7 being accepted for matriculation purposes: one example was the requirement for a H4 (60>70) in Mathematics for Engineering to replace the current HC3 (55-59) requirement.

Despite minimal risk to the entry profile of students to Trinity, it would be necessary to decide whether to accept the HE for matriculation purposes in relation to the legacy cohort. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer reminded members that HEIs had autonomy over their admissions requirements, whilst pointing out that it appeared that other universities were prepared to accept the HE for matriculation.

During discussion, two concerns were raised by members that 1) Trinity should maintain a certain standard of academic achievement and 2) to allow the HE may be seen to disadvantage previous applicants who had not had the HE accepted.

Accepting the minimum risk the situation posed to Trinity, USC approved the acceptance of the HE for matriculation purposes.

Mapping old grades to new for minimum subject requirements

The issue of equivalence of achievement across higher and ordinary levels in the new grading bands and the mapping of current to new subject requirements had also been raised in the TGRUSE Chair's communication.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer reminded members of the intersection between the higher and ordinary level scales in the new grading bands and points system: essentially, the H5-O1, H6-O2 and H7-O3 intersected. The basis of this alignment was equivalence of achievement. The State Examinations Commission had determined that it would ensure through assessment design and grading the equivalence of achievement at these levels.

In mapping current subject requirements to the new grading bands, it was evident that there were inconsistencies across HEIs: for example, the current requirement for a HD3 or OC3 was translated variously to H6-O3, H6-O4, H7-O4, H7-O3. Whilst the 2017 requirements had already been published, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer noted that it would seem appropriate to review requirements within Trinity for subsequent years in line with the alignment. Using equivalence as a basis for subject requirements would lead to greater consistency, without compromising our autonomy to set our own requirements. This received the support of members. The Dean also observed that there was perhaps a need to move away from comparing the 'old and new monies' and focus on the value of the new currency.

**USC/16-17/006 Any Other Business**

- The Senior Lecturer impressed upon members the need for Schools to respond to issues identified in external examiner reports.
- Discussion of the Self-Evaluation of USC 2015/16 was postponed to the next meeting.

**USC/16-17/007 Minutes**

USC noted the following minutes:

- 1. Royal Irish Academy of Music, Associated College Degrees Committee,**  
Minutes of 3 February 2016
- 2. Associated College Degrees Committee,**  
Draft minutes of 11 May 2016

**USC/16-17/008 Items for noting**

USC noted the following item:

**Erasmus Conversion Table for Trinity Students Returning from Study Abroad,**  
updated September 2016.

The Senior Lecturer advised that Schools/Offices wishing to propose a change should contact her and she would bring it to the attention of the International Committee.