



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 28 September 2021 at 2.00 pm via Zoom.

Present: Professor David Shepherd, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Professor Catherine McCabe, Dean of Students
Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor
Professor Áine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE)
Professor Graeme Murdock, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA)
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts
Professor Andrew Loxley, School of Education
Professor Mark Sweetnam, School of English
Professor Robert Armstrong, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Sarah Hamill, School of Law
Professor Ciara O'Hagan, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Margaret Walshe, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Clare Kelly, School of Psychology
Professor Michelle D'Arcy, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Julie Byrne, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Jacob Erickson, School of Religion
Professor Vincent Kelly, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Iouri Gounko, School of Chemistry
Professor Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Kevin Kelly, School of Engineering
Professor Juan Pablo Labrador, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics
Professor Carlos Rocha, School of Natural Sciences
Professor David O'Regan, School of Physics
Professor Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
Professor Damien Brennan, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent
Ms Bev Genockey, Education Officer, Students' Union
Mr Yannick Gloster, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Roisin Smith, Quality Officer; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services.

USC/21-22/001 Welcome

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed members and attendees to the first meeting of 2021/22 and invited participants to introduce themselves. He referred to recent meetings he had held with Directors of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning (DUTLs) on a group basis and indicated that he would like to meet each one on an individual basis, to discuss the pressing undergraduate issues in their schools. He explained that he hoped USC could be used as a forum to promote mutual support amongst its members.

USC/21-22/002 Minutes of the meeting of 18 May 2021

The minutes of the meeting of 18 May 2021 were approved.

USC/21-22/003 Matters arising

USC/20-21/085 The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the course proposal for the Dual Degree Programme in Mathematics, with Columbia University, was approved by Council.

USC/20-21/086 The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the establishment of the E3-STEM Study Abroad Pilot Programme was approved by Council.

USC/20-21/087 The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2019/20 was approved by Council.

USC/20-21/088 The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that the Widening Participation Group Report was approved by Council.

USC/20-21/092 The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies also noted that the restructuring of undergraduate degree programmes in the Royal Irish Academy of Music, to create a programme in Music Performance and Composition, leading to the Mus.B., was approved by Council.

USC/21-22/004 Compression of Semester One Teaching (incl. impact on assessments)

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 24 September 2021, was circulated.

Speaking to the item, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that questions in relation to the compression of Semester 1 teaching were still being raised and that he hoped the memorandum had helped to address these queries. He thanked both the ADUCA and ADUSE for working with schools and disciplines to find solutions to the reported problems.

A member commented that the plan put forward, to compress Semester 1 teaching, could not be implemented cleanly since students do not belong to neat school silos; programmes span schools and faculties, meaning that bespoke arrangements had to be made in a number of cases. Another member queried, in situations where Semester 1 teaching had been compressed, if course work deadlines could be set for after Christmas. It was also asked whether or not a deadline had been set for the confirmation of Semester 1 results in SITS. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies asked the member to follow-up directly with him in relation to course work deadlines and advised that information would be sought from the Academic Registry in relation to the timeline for the submission of Semester 1 results.

Action/Decision USC/21-22/004: Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies to follow-up with the Academic Registry on the deadline for Semester 1 assessment results.

USC/21-22/005 Draft Institutional Self Evaluation Report for Consultation

A memorandum from the Academic Secretary, dated 15 September 2021, was circulated along with the draft Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER).

The Academic Secretary spoke to the item by way of a presentation. She noted that the document had been circulated to USC in advance of the normal circulation date, given its size. She advised the meeting that the review visit by an international panel is scheduled to take place from 7-11 March 2022. This was originally planned for October 2020 but has been rescheduled twice, due to COVID-19, to ensure that a site visit could take place. She explained that the focus of the review is on the effectiveness of Trinity's quality assurance procedures for education, training, research and services, and for compliance with the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

A number of documents, in addition to the ISER, will be submitted to the QQI for the international panel. She highlighted that the purpose of the ISER document is to encourage Trinity to reflect on where it is in compliance with requirements and also where there are gaps.

Responding to a query from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Graduate Studies, the Academic Secretary confirmed that she had received suggestions and corrections, with staff highlighting narrative gaps related to Trinity's online provision, progress in meeting Athena SWAN criteria and efforts in relation to environmental sustainability. She confirmed that the final version must be circulated early to Council by Monday, 4 October 2021 at the latest, meaning that if any USC member wished to comment, they should do so no later than Thursday 30 September.

The Academic Secretary acknowledged the work of the Quality Officer in producing the ISER, and other documents, and in planning for the March 2022 review visit. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Academic Secretary for her work and the presentation of the item.

Action/Decision USC/21-22/005: Members wishing to comment on the ISER to do so no later than Thursday 30 September 2021.

USC/21-22/006 Academic Misconduct/Plagiarism Policy and Process

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 24 September 2021, was circulated for discussion. Speaking to the item, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that he, the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Junior Dean saw the need for a revision of policy and procedures related to plagiarism, and the broader area of academic misconduct. He emphasised that the circulated terms of reference and working group membership were still very much at a draft stage, and he asked the meeting for comments.

The following points and suggestions were made during the discussion:

- the current procedure at school-level is managed by the DUTL, but where teaching is delivered across schools it is not clear which DUTL is responsible;
- the penalties for sanctions at levels 1 and 2, may actually reward the student;
- the penalty of capping resubmitted work can have unintended consequences;
- the administrative burden to organise the meeting with the student is heavy, given the various required attendees;
- regulations apply to committing plagiarism but not to facilitating it through students sharing their work;
- due process must be incorporated into any revised procedures;
- plagiarism in the Sophister years is sometimes committed by students experiencing mental health problems;
- additional members could include the College Solicitor and a representative from the Student Cases team;
- given that the severity of penalties jump significantly, the DUTL is not always made aware of plagiarism cases, which are dealt with by module coordinators outside of the procedures;
- perhaps additional levels of seriousness/sanctions are required to provide more nuanced sanctions;
- student transcripts currently offer no record of plagiarism/academic misconduct;
- more attention should be paid to designing assessments that help students to avoid plagiarism;
- there should be further student representation on the working group or perhaps student meetings/focus groups could be held throughout the development process to facilitate student engagement;

- it is important to define plagiarism and collusion and then to discuss those acts of academic misconduct which do not quite fall under the specific definitions;
- plagiarism and collusion are different and should be kept as separate terms;
- care must be taken to avoid penalising students in examination situations where they give a 'textbook' answer, as this is acceptable in certain disciplines, e.g., Medicine;
- the current online tutorial 'Ready, Steady, Write' needs to be completely revamped;
- there should be a shift in focus from the plagiarism policy, which is quite negative and reactive, students should be asked to commit to values of academic integrity instead;
- penalties tend to affect behaviours in the short-term, a cultural shift is needed to affect longer-term behaviours;
- representation on the working group could include those from College services which provide supports students who are in danger of resorting to plagiarism and cheating;
- cognisance must be taken of the different types of assessment, e.g., collaboration in group work is encouraged and should not be penalised;
- not all disciplines consider the sharing of work and knowledge as collusion;
- students will often benchmark their work or seek advice from their peers as a method of gauging their own progress;
- it would be informative to look at successful methods to counter academic misconduct in other institutions, such as honour-based systems and student panels to preside over cases;
- a representative from Academic Affairs should be on the working group;
- the majority of plagiarism cases formally recorded in recent years relate to first year students.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commenting on the varying opinions across USC noted that any revised policy will have to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the diversity of assessment practices across the disciplines.

He thanked the meeting for the discussion points raised and suggestions in relation to the membership of the working group.

USC/21-22/007 Items of Business following the last USC meeting of 2020/21

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 22 September 2021, was circulated. USC noted the following items of business, which had been managed via e-mail procedures and/or approved by Council through vacation procedures, since the last meeting of USC in May 2021:

- (a) Gold Medals and Prizes 2020/21
- (b) Covid-19 Vaccination Policy for Students in Clinical Placements or Placements in Allied Health Settings
- (c) Semester 1 Assessment Contingency Days 2021/22

USC/21-22/008 Any other business

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted that he was seeking volunteers for the Micro-Credentials Sub-Committee of USC and GSC. He noted that a module coordinator representative was required from the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged that some schools in Trinity are still struggling with space for in-person teaching. He invited members to contact him to discuss the issues and to see if solutions can be put in place.
- iii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies drew the attention of the Committee to the Academic Integrity item under Section C. He noted that Academic Integrity Week would take place from 18-22 October 2021, with the keynote speech to be delivered by Dr Thomas Lancaster, Imperial College London. Further information will be available in early October.

- iv. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted the Section C item on Equality, Diversity, Inclusion in Higher Education Training, which members of College committees should undertake, as provided for in the College Statutes and as required to meet Athena SWAN obligations.
- v. Several members reported that some registered students could not access Blackboard, the online teaching and learning platform. The Director of Student Services advised that students who are due to register should automatically have access to Blackboard. She invited members to contact her with details so that she could investigate further. Another member queried if off-books students, who are taking assessment (OBA), can access Blackboard whilst they are off-books in order to complete their assessments. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that information on the access to Blackboard for OBA students would be sought.
- vi. A member flagged that their School was experiencing problems with the fixed timetable, particularly in multi-discipline programmes. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies asked the member to contact him directly to set-up a meeting to discuss the issues.
- vii. It was commented by a member that there is a lack of clarity among the student body about the format of their Semester 1 assessments, and he queried whether these would take the form of in-person examinations or not. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies responded that there should be clarity within schools as to which Semester 1 modules are to be assessed via in-person examinations and that schools and course directors should share this information as soon as possible.

USC/21-22/009 Minutes (Section B)

USC noted and approved the following set of minutes:

Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee

Minutes of the meeting of 4 May 2021.

USC/21-22/010 Items for noting (Section C)

USC noted and approved, where necessary, the following items/documents:

- i. **Academic Integrity**
National Academic Integrity Week, 18-22 October 2021
Academic Integrity: National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms
Academic Integrity Guidelines
- ii. **USC Self-Evaluation Survey Results 2020/21**
Memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 21 September 2021.
- iii. **Trinity Elective Sub-Committee Membership 2021/22**
Memorandum from the Chair of the Trinity Electives Sub-Committee, dated 22 September 2021.
- iv. **Equality, Diversity, Inclusion in Higher Education Training**
<https://www.tcd.ie/equality/training/lead-online-training/>
- v. **Rollover of Derogations: Progression and Award Regulations 2021/22**
Memorandum from Ms. Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs, dated 22 September 2021.