



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 11 October 2022 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 Fraser Mitchell, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE)
Professor Graeme Murdock, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA)
Professor Catherine Welch, Trinity Business School
Professor Miranda Fay Thomas, School of Creative Arts
Professor Ann Devitt, School of Education
Professor Mark Sweetnam, School of English
Professor Robert Armstrong, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Martin Worthington, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor David Kenny, School of Law
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, Theology, and Peace Studies
Professor Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Vincent Kelly, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Iouri Gounko, School of Chemistry
Professor Goetz Botterweck, 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 Matthew Saunders, School of Natural Sciences
Professor David O'Regan, School of Physics
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent
Ms Zöe Cummins, Education Officer, Students' Union

Apologies: Professor Stephen Smith, Senior Tutor; Professor Aileen Lynch, School of Nursing and Midwifery.

In attendance: Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Ms Jade Concannon, Academic Practice (for item USC/22-23/018); Professor Rachel Hoare (for item USC/22-23/019)

USC/22-23/012 Minutes of the meeting of 20 September 2022

The minutes of the meeting of 20 September 2022 were approved.

USC/22-23/013 Matters arising

- i. **USC/22-23/006:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that, following discussions with the Vice Provost/Chief Academic Officer, the Dean of Research, and the Dean of Graduate Studies, it will not be possible to amend the scheduling of the reassessment session this academic year as wider consultation on this is required. He informed members that a review of the academic year structure will be progressed this year.

USC/22-23/014 Senior Lecturer's Updates

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke on the topic of Online Module Enrolment (OME) for reassessed students and those returning from study abroad, stating that the OME Development Group has undertaken to review the current process with the aim of identify solutions to ongoing issues. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that a list of areas under consideration by the Group will be circulated to USC.

Members stressed the significant administrative workload on Schools, brought about by OME, pointing to significant gaps in functionality, for example, between enrolment data and the production of timetables. The impact on student learning was also highlighted, due to the first-come-first-served policy as those who participated in the reassessment session or Study Abroad are being disadvantaged in their selection of modules.

Members suggested that an independent review may be warranted and that wider representation from Schools and students on the OME Development Group was necessary due to the far-reaching impact of the matter. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged the frustrations expressed and implications felt by staff and some students. He clarified that Schools are currently represented on the OME Working Group and undertook to discuss the structure of the OME Development Group with the Vice Provost/Chief Academic Officer.

Responding to a comment from a member regarding the possibility of conversations with vendors to address outstanding issues relating to OME, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that discussions had taken place, however no suitable solutions has been identified. He explained that the Provost is aware of the need for significant investment in the area, although he acknowledged that progress is slow. He reiterated that every effort will be taken to address the issues raised and the Directors of IT Services and Student Services will be invited to provide an update to USC.

- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the Central Scholarship Committee recently met to discuss a review of Foundation Scholarship. The Committee suggested that the student perspective should be sought, and the Faculty Deans will be consulted on the process and questions to be asked. In response to a query, he confirmed that the issue of students on Dual Degree programmes with Columbia University will also be considered.
- iii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies drew attention to Academic Integrity Week which will run from 17th-21st October 2022 and advised that an e-mail campaign will disseminate useful information and resources on academic integrity. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited the SU Education Officer to update the meeting on the plans of the Students' Union who advised that a survey may be conducted to gauge student understanding of academic integrity. She highlighted that a campaign entitled "Don't Drop Out, Drop in", aimed at students who are struggling with their studies and College life, will take place during reading week. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate thanked the SU Education Officer, stating that the Academic Integrity Working Group also plans to administer a survey on the topic, and inviting the SU Education Officer to discuss their plans regarding surveys with him.

USC/22-23/015 Work Priorities for the coming year

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 05 October 2022, was circulated. He thanked members for their contributions, which are reflected in the 2022/23 workplan. He stated that while the plan will direct the work of the committee, he warned that external factors may impinge on the ability to progress work. He advised that a

review of the USC Terms of Reference will be conducted as part of a wider review of college structures in response to the Higher Education Authority Bill 2022.

USC/22-23/016 Working group on UG Regulations

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A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 05 October 2022, was circulated. Speaking to the memo, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies proposed to set up a working group to review UG regulations, which will consist of the Senior Lecturer, the Senior Tutor, the Head of Student Cases (Academic Registry), the Lead of Assessment, Progression and Graduation (Academic Registry), the Associate Deans of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE) and Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA), the Student Union Education Officer, a member of Academic Affairs and potentially also former Senior Lecturers.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited feedback from members, who suggested including representation from tutors and from the Trinity Disability Service. The inclusion of course directors or School representation was also suggested, with some members highlighting possible confusion between the responsibilities of programme offices and Schools when teaching is delivered across multiple schools.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their input and advised he will consider it when forming the working group.

Decision/Action

016 USC supported the proposal to establish a working group on UG Regulations.

USC/22-23/017 Review of External Examiner Policy

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 05 October 2022, was circulated, along with the Council approved memorandum on the review of the External Examiner Policy. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies included some questions in the circulated memo for members' consideration and invited input.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- In-person attendance of EEs should not be obligatory; this could rotate annually which would be more sustainable.
- Schools have different requirements, with an onsite external review essential in some instances, therefore there should be discretion to choose an online or in person review.
- If online visits are permitted, a clear procedure is necessary, for example guidance on how scripts will be chosen for review.
- Remuneration should be benchmarked against UK universities as the current fee is less than what UK institutions offer.
- Clarity on eligibility criteria is needed with clear examples of what constitutes a conflict of interest.
- Expanded support for the process is needed.
- One member was in favour of expanding the criteria to allow retirees to serve as External Examiners.
- There are overlapping sections on the forms which External Examiners complete, and these should be reviewed.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented on the varying opinions, noting that these considerations will be taken on board. He thanked the meeting for their contribution.

USC/22-23/018 Teaching Excellence Awards

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 05 October 2022, was circulated along with a document outlining the proposed Teaching Excellence

Award process and criteria. He advised that a review of the Awards process had been undertaken by himself, along with members of staff from Academic Practice and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

He welcomed Ms Jade Elizabeth Concannon from Academic Practice who spoke to the item by way of presentation. She gave an overview of the background of the Awards, noting that while adjustments are regularly implemented based on feedback from External Examiners and Student Representatives, a comprehensive review is now timely. The suggested changes include:

- At least one student nomination is required, with an increased citation word count.
- Schools to be involved in the shortlisting stage, and a School award introduced.
- The introduction of annual themes which reflect the educational mission, vision and strategic imperatives of the University.
- A 5 minute 'Lightning Talk' to replace the 20 minute recorded teaching activity.
- The removal of the Early Career Award and the Peer Reviewer category.

In the discussion that followed Ms. Concannon's presentation, the involvement of Schools was commended as this will encourage Schools to nominate a member of staff. The need for student input was highlighted, and a member suggested that incentives be introduced to encourage students to put forward a nomination.

Some members questioned the need for introducing a thematic aspect, with one pointing out that they may stifle creativity. In response, Ms. Concannon stated that the idea of introducing themes came from a benchmarking process and would ensure the Awards are dynamic and current.

In relation to the proposed 5-minute Lightning Talk, a member highlighted that the decrease in time allotted to nominees to showcase their teaching activities may mean that there will not be sufficient time to fulfil this purpose.

A number of comments pertained to the onerousness of the nomination and application process, which acts as a deterrent to nominees proceeding any further. One member commented that the format of the application form could be re-designed to allow nominees to reflect their work more faithfully. It was suggested that levels of recognition might be introduced, to recognise teaching excellence in a less burdensome manner, and one member pointed to the Dean's Awards in the Faculty of Health Sciences as an example of good practice.

In response to a query, Ms. Concannon advised that, if requested, a message of appreciation to students who submitted the nomination is passed on, but this could be routinely incorporated into the process if necessary. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the meeting for a fruitful discussion and advised that all feedback will be taken into consideration when finalizing the Awards process.

USC/22-23/019 Inclusive Curriculum

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 05 October 2022, was circulated and he welcomed Professor Rachel Hoare to the meeting.

Professor Hoare introduced the Trinity-INC project by way of a presentation, bringing the meeting through the goals and activities of the project, which are structured across four pillars of initiatives: academic; student; institutional and a final wraparound infrastructure pillar. She advised that the project relates to the strategic National Access Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2022-2023, from which Trinity was allocated funds under the PATH 4 stream.

She drew attention to the Professional Learning Module on Inclusive Practices for Teaching and Learning offered by Trinity-INC, which is open to both academic and professional staff who support teaching and learning at Trinity. She went on to highlight the Inclusive Trinity Festival, taking place from 10th– 20th October 2022, with a range of activities available.

Members were invited to consider the following questions:

1. What do schools need from Trinity-INC to implement inclusive Teaching and Learning practices?
2. How can schools integrate inclusivity into module proposal and evaluation forms and processes?
3. How can schools embed inclusivity in their Teaching and Learning policies?

The following points and suggestions were made during the discussion:

- Resources are needed to support teaching staff to embed inclusivity.
- Reflection is needed on what areas can be targeted by the Trinity-INC, where the biggest impact be achieved?
- Some programmes may experience challenges in the implementation of these practices and processes and tailored strategies are needed.
- How can progress on equality and inclusion be accurately captured?
- Guidance for teaching students with invisible disabilities would be helpful.
- An email campaign would be useful to disseminate information in an accessible manner.

Responding to the comments, Professor Hoare advised that Trinity-INC regularly hold 30-minute informational sessions which are open to all staff. She highlighted the work of the School Champions who encourage participation on the project from Schools in the Faculties of STEM and Health. In response to a query, Professor Hoare agreed that embedding inclusivity principles is not a straightforward process.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies concluded the discussion and thanked Professor Hoare for her presentation, encouraging members to contact her directly with any further feedback.

USC/22-23/020 Any other business

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised members that due to a scheduling clash, the December 2022 meeting will have to be moved. He advised that correspondence will be sent out to members to collect their preferences on this.
- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised members that the [procedure on non-submission of coursework and absence from examinations](#) will be implemented in 2022-23 and that a correspondence on this will be forthcoming.

USC/22-23/021 Minutes (Section B)

None

USC/22-23/022 Items for noting (Section C)

None