



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 20 September 2022 at 2.00 pm in the Boardroom.

Present: Professor David Shepherd, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Professor Catherine McCabe, Dean of Students
Professor Stephen Smith, Senior Tutor
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, Peace Studies
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 Matthews Saunders, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
Professor Aileen Lynch, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent
Ms Zöe Cummins, Education Officer, Students' Union

Apologies: Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary; Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences; Professor Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science; Professor David O'Regan, School of Physics

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs; Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary; Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Director of Academic Practice; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director of the Academic Registry and Mr Cillian Long (for item USC/22-23/006); Professor Lorna Carson (for item USC/22-23/007)

USC/22-23/001 Welcome

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed members and attendees, particularly new members, to the first meeting of 2022/23 and invited participants to introduce themselves.

USC/22-23/002 Minutes of the meeting of 17 May 2022

The minutes of the meeting of 17 May 2022 were approved.

USC/22-23/003 Matters arising

- i. **USC/21-22/071:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the agreed recommendations for Gold Medals were approved by Council and Board, that the General Regulations in the Calendar Part II were updated accordingly, and that an e-mail with comprehensive information was sent to course offices and Schools. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies extended his appreciation to Sorcha De Brunner, and staff in the Academic Registry for their work on this.
- ii. **USC/21-22/073:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the Calendar Changes for 2022/23 were approved by Council.
- iii. **USC/21-22/074:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that Council approved the Curriculum Glossary, which is now available on the TT&L website.
- iv. **USC/21-22/078 (iii):** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the new Further Education and Training admission routes were approved by Council.
- v. **USC/21-22/078 (iv):** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that Council approved the additional degree destinations and changes to progression requirements for the Trinity International Foundation Programme.

USC/22-23/004 Senior Lecturer's Updates

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke on the topic of Online Module Enrolment (OME), stating that while Academic Registry have striven to ensure the process ran as smoothly as possible, systematic limits still do exist. He acknowledged the frustrations that the process has caused affected students. He stated that the OME Development Group had hoped to have solutions in place for returning students, and students who underwent reassessment, but this was not possible this year. He noted that the OME Development Group will meet to discuss this further. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that he had met with the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer on this matter and impressed on her the need for investment in the infrastructure.
- ii. Speaking on the topic of the Foundation Scholarship, The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that while a root and branch review is planned, this will not be carried out this year. He noted, however, that a periodic review is now due, the details of which will be discussed through the Central Scholarship Committee. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies will also meet with the Faculty Deans to discuss this, and Directors of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning (DUTLs) will be facilitated to have input through their respective Faculty.
- iii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies gave an overview of the work that is underway on Academic Integrity, stating that three subgroups of the Academic Integrity Working Group have now resumed work on a number of issues, including academic misconduct in assessment and academic integrity in the research space. Academic Integrity Week will take place between 17th-21st October 2022 and collaboration with the Students' Union will take place to raise awareness of the work of in this area.

USC/22-23/005 Items of Business following the last USC meeting of 2021/22

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 14 September 2022, was circulated. He noted that the revised curriculum for the B.Mus.Ed, had been approved by USC, via e-mail procedures, and approved by Council through vacation procedures, since the last meeting of USC in May 2022.

USC/22-23/006 Examination Sessions 2022/23: Operational Update and Contingency Days

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A memorandum from the Director of the Academic Registry and the Manager of Assessment, Progression and Graduation, dated 13 September 2022, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director of

the Academic Registry and Mr Cillian Long, the Manager of Assessment, Progression and Graduation to the meeting. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies introduced Mr Cillian Long, who has recently succeeded Ms Gráinne de Bhulbh.

The Director of the Academic Registry provided an operational update on the planned conduct of the Semester 1, Semester 2, and reassessment examination sessions in 2022/23, via a short presentation. She stated that sessions will largely follow the Council approved, pre-Covid profile and parameters for assessments. She noted that additional parameters, to accommodate hybrid examination sessions, would also be included. These additional parameters included:

- Limit of two examination sessions per day
- Online examinations can be scheduled for a maximum of 5 hours which will include a maximum of one hour 'padding' to allow for technical or submission upload difficulties.
- A 1.5 hour gap between exams is scheduled to ensure that students can attend all formats of examinations, and a dedicated space will be available on campus for students to take online exams.

The Director of the Academic Registry brought the meeting through the approved dates for examinations and contingency days, as below:

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| Semester 1 | Approved Dates for Examination | Monday, 12 – Friday, 16 December |
| | Proposed Contingency Days / Dates | 3 days Wednesday, 7 – Friday, 9 December |
| Semester 2 | Approved Dates for Examination | Tuesday, 2 – Saturday, 6 May <i>(Note Monday, 1 May is a Bank Holiday)</i> |
| | Proposed Contingency Days / Dates | 3 days Thursday, 27 – Saturday, 29 April |
| Reexamination Period | Approved Dates for Examination | Monday, 28 August – Friday, 1 September |
| | Proposed Contingency Days / Dates | 3 days Wednesday, 23 – Friday, 25 August |

During the discussion, concerns were raised about the issues caused by scheduling the reassessment period so close to the start of the new academic year, which resulted in a very tight timeframe for marking and progression processes this year. A number of members emphasised difficulties in adhering to timelines for marking and the impact on students, who need to arrange finance and accommodation at very short notice. International students are particularly affected by this, with some reporting no choice but to go off books. One member suggested bringing the reassessment period forward by one week, although another member noted that this would impinge on the time academics have to focus on research during the summer period. The Director of the Academic Registry responded that she would look at possible scenarios related to this suggestion. She noted that in-person examinations rely on a lot of human resources and explained that staff in the Academic Registry (AR) have been investigating alternative practices such as requiring course work rather than examinations for reassessments. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that moving the dates would be considered, however, he acknowledged that more significant changes may be needed. The Director of the Academic Registry stated that options will be explored. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the item will be returned to the committee in due course.

Ms Jennifer Pepper and Mr Cillian Long withdrew from the meeting.

A member highlighted that the 1.5 hour gap between examinations may not be sufficient and that appropriate resources are needed to deal with any requests from students should they have difficulties in adhering to their schedule. A concern was raised about the timing of the contingency days for the Semester 2 examinations, which run over the weekend. It was also highlighted that the scheduling of contingency dates prior to the examination period in Semester 1 will particularly affect JF students, who are operating within a compressed teaching semester.

Action/Decision

006.1 The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies to discuss the scheduling of the reexamination sessions in 2022/23 with the Director of the Academic Registry.

006.2 USC supported the contingency days for the 2022/23 Semester 1 and Semester 2 examinations, subject to the appropriate scheduling of exams for JF students.

USC/22-23/007 Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Presentations: Assessing Languages: Digital Development and Innovation Project (ALADDIN)

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Professor Lorna Carson, who delivered a presentation on the ALADDIN project, which aimed to introduce digital innovation in language testing. To this end, a suite of multilingual online language assessment tools was developed, facilitating a learner-led language learning model which meets the changing needs of students and instructors. She brought the meeting through the project key deliverables, examples of the testing tools and the impacts of the project. She highlighted the open-source nature of the tools, making them publicly accessible.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Professor Carson for the presentation. Members congratulated Prof Carson on a wonderful project, and in particular the open-source aspect. In response to a query, Prof Carson stated that the project team is hoping to continue to add to the online depository and include new languages.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted the merits in applying for funding for such projects and thanked the Assistant Academic Secretary on her work on the management of the Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) Funding. In response to a query from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies on future SATLE funded initiatives, the Assistant Academic Secretary advised that the HEA is providing institutions with funding in relation to specific themes, such as academic integrity, and that this is under consideration at present.

Professor Lorna Carson withdrew from the meeting

USC/22-23/008 USC Workplan 2022/23

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 14 September 2022, was circulated which outlined potential issues or topics for USC to consider this academic year. He explained that while the terms of reference do circumscribe, to some extent, what the committee can do, there is latitude to this, and the purpose of this discussion is to give members more input in the work of the committee. He invited members to suggest additional items for the workplan. In the discussion that followed a number of suggestions were made:

- The academic year structure, particularly regarding assessment and progression, and Online Module Enrolment timelines should be reviewed.
- A review of TEP is now timely, and should look at timetable structures, which can restrict module options for Senior Sophister students.

- Study Abroad should be looked at, with attention given to learning agreements with Erasmus exchange destinations, particularly in relation to progression regulations; for example Trinity allows reassessments while some institutions do not.
- A mechanism to review undergraduate regulations on a regular basis is necessary to ensure they are up to date and fit for purpose. This could address a proportion of student cases, streamlining the process and could be done on a rolling basis.
- The ability to conduct examinations by computer, which was utilized during COVID measures, would be more efficient than handwritten examinations and more accessible. Software can be used to ensure academic integrity.
- The communication of policies and regulations needs to be improved, particularly in the context of shifting back to 'normal' practices and away from accommodations established in response to the COVID pandemic. Students should be able to access regulations in a clear and simple manner.
- Actions or discussions in relation to the inclusive curriculum need to include considerations of those with mental health issues.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their suggestions and brought the meeting through the topics outlined in the draft workplan, which was circulated. He stated that there are certain standard items that come to USC every year such as course proposals and annual reports and noted that he plans to improve the Senior Lecturer Annual Report this year. He commented that the USC terms of reference and membership have not been updated since 2012 and are due a review. In response to a query, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that the change to Council procedure, on how items are presented there, means that USC has more responsibility to scrutinize proposals that it considers.

Referring to the topic of student attendance, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that while precautions are still necessary, in-person student attendance is being promoted as a crucial aspect of their education. Some members emphasised the importance of physical attendance, which is an integral part of the student experience, and stressed that the implications for non-attendance need to be clearly communicated. One member commented that cognizance of barriers students face in attending is important, such as work commitments or commuting, which students must undertake in order to avail of more affordable accommodation. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed with this sentiment and stated that he will send a communication to all students and staff to emphasise the importance of attendance.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke to the topic on academic integrity, stating that while work is underway through the Working Group, he also wants to ensure members are engaged in this issue. He commented that plagiarism has increased, and clearer regulations are needed to address this.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that a proposal is planned for Council's consideration for a review of the current external examiner policies and processes. He stated that internationally, Ireland, along with the UK, are outliers internationally in terms of requiring an external examiner process. A member commented that as the process is closely linked with the Court of Examiner process, this also needs to be reviewed.

One member stressed the urgency of addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis and queried if a sub-committee could be established to give it appropriate discussion time. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed that this could be a possibility. A member commented that the wider Trinity community, particularly students, would warmly welcome any innovative changes in relation to

curriculum, such as initiatives on sustainability, however structures need to be in place to facilitate this.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked all members for their contributions and advised that an e-mail will be circulated with an MS form for members to rank the issues by importance, which will feed into the workplan for the upcoming year.

USC/22-23/009 Any other business

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies drew attention to the item on derogations in Section C, stating that further clarification has been provided on previously agreed derogations for Social Studies, from regulation 4(i) with respect to the balance of credit load, and from regulation 7 for Dental Science, as students cannot repeat a year off books with assessment (OBA).
- ii. A member commented that the deadline for submitting examination module assessment patterns is next week. In response the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that he would consult with the Director of the Academic Registry regarding the timing of the reassessment period for 2022/23.
- iii. One member queried if Schools have the ability to introduce deterrents to combat non-attendance. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that the regulations are not specific on what actions can be taken and advised the member to contact him directly to discuss this further.
- iv. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that this will be the last meeting attended by Dr Ciara O'Farrell, who will be stepping away from Trinity and thanked her for her contribution over the years and wished her well.
- v. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies informed members that Ms Sorcha De Brunner will no longer be Secretary to the Committee, having taken up a new position in the Secretary's Office. He thanked her for her contribution and diligence in supporting the committee, commenting that she has been a great assistance to him, as well as former Senior Lecturers over the years.

USC/22-23/010 Minutes (Section B)

None

USC/22-23/011 Items for noting (Section C)

USC noted and approved, the following items:

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- i. **Derogations from Progression and Award Regulations for 2022/23**
Memorandum from Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs, dated 14 September 2022
- ii. **Trinity Elective Sub-committee Membership 2022/23**
Memorandum from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture and Chair of the Trinity Electives Sub-Committee, dated 14 September 2022.
- iii. **Self- evaluation Survey Results 2021/22**
Memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 14 September 2022.