



**A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 21 March 2023 at 2.00 pm.**

Present: Professor David Shepherd, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)  
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary  
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 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 Aileen Lynch, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
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  
Mr Yannick Gloster, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Miranda Fay Thomas, School of Creative Arts  
Ms Zöe Cummins, Education Officer, Students' Union

In attendance: Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Dr Pauline Rooney, Director of Academic Practice; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services.

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**USC/22-23/065 Minutes of the meeting of 21 February 2023**

The minutes of the meeting of 21 February 2023 were approved.

**USC/22-23/066 Matters arising**

- i. **USC/22-23/058** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the three Trinity Elective proposals, 'Inequality in the 21st Century', 'Identities and

Ecologies of Latin America and the Caribbean: Past, Present and Future’ and ‘Ages of Empire’, were approved by Council.

- ii. **USC/22-23/061** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the revisions to the Reasonable Accommodation policy were approved by Council.

**USC/22-23/067 Sustainability: Vision and Graduate Attributes**

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies introduced the item, reminding members that the Sustainability in UG Education (SUGE) working group has been considering how to enable students to meaningfully engage with critical sustainability issues, and that this is a strategic priority of Trinity. He brought the meeting through a presentation, providing information on the composition and terms of reference of the working group. Speaking to the agreed principles, he highlighted that there is a commitment to ensure that implementation of the sustainability strategy should extend to all students, and that it would be embedded within disciplines and be interdisciplinary in nature.

The Vice President for Biodiversity & Climate Action, Professor Jane Stout, joined the meeting and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited her to continue with the presentation. She shared the draft vision and graduate attributes statements with USC, stressing that the intention of the vision is to ensure the strategy is meaningful and will endure beyond students’ time in Trinity. She explained that the recruitment of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Fellows is ongoing, with four fellows identified to start in April 2023. It is envisioned that the Fellows will develop a workplan and engage with Schools to develop an implementation plan.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited questions and comments.

A member welcomed the strategy and pointed out that the terms ‘sustainable development’ and ‘climate and biodiversity crisis’ are used interchangeably in the ‘I am’ statements, but he felt that only one should be used. In response, it was noted that different terminologies were deliberately deployed to try to capture diverse perspectives on what sustainability encompasses and what the strategy is aiming to achieve.

Members questioned the use of the verb ‘share’ in the vision, suggesting an alternative be considered. In response to a member questioning the usefulness of the comma in the draft vision, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies explained that it was inserted to communicate the aim for students to continue to engage with values of sustainability beyond their time in Trinity. The Academic Secretary suggested that newly appointed Fellows could conduct a consultation with Schools on the vision once they commence their post.

A discussion on the ‘I am statements’ took place. A member stated that while he welcomes the idea, there is a danger that adding statements specifically in relation to sustainability and this would minimize other equally important social issues such as poverty eradication. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the member for the contribution, stating that the group had considered this issue at length and acknowledged the limitations. He stated that the statements may be used in a heuristic manner rather than necessarily added to the existing list. Another member agreed that these are useful in communicating to Schools and teaching staff what it is that students are expected to do as a result of this strategy. A member pointed out that the ‘I am’ statements are exemplars of the Graduate Attributes to indicate how sustainability education could be seen through the prism of the graduate attributes.

The Librarian Representative highlighted that a [Climate Literacy reading list](#) has been compiled as part of Green Week and requested that if members have suggestions for the list they should get in touch so they can be added to the list.

The Academic Secretary stated that while the working group is focused on embedding values of sustainability in the undergraduate curriculum, this could equally be applicable to postgraduate space. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies concurred and advised that undergraduate education is a starting point, and the Dean of Graduate Studies will be engaged on this in the future to explore how it can be applied in the postgraduate space.

#### **USC/22-23/068 Senior Lecturer's Updates**

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies referred to the discussion on the procedures for the non-submission of coursework and absence from examinations at the last USC meeting and stated that he has considered members' feedback on this. He stated that he has since initiated multiple discussions with relevant parties across College and that previously unidentified obstacles and risks to the implementation of the policy have become increasingly clear. Referring to the removal of a capping mechanism within SITS during TEP, he stated that additional manual work will be required at an already busy progression period, which could increase the likelihood of human error. Additionally, he stated that Academic Registry have identified over 400 modules that conduct a 100% re-assessment, and he explained there is a risk that students on these modules would be disproportionately disadvantaged should the policy be implemented. He pointed out that the practice of re-assessing at the modular level, rather than the component level, is at odds with Calendar regulations, specifically sections 61 and 62 along with 49 which states that students are not permitted to repeat successfully completed examinations or assessments. He advised that this incongruity will be addressed but that this will not be possible within this academic year.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies recommended to USC that the policy is paused for a further year to ensure students are not unfairly disadvantaged and to allow time to get a sense of the numbers of students to whom this policy will apply. He requested that members contact him directly if they are aware of any unintended consequences that may arise as a result of this.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited comments and questions from members.

In response to a query on the Calendar regulations, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies responded that different modalities of assessment are permitted at the re-assessment session however the weighting and number of the reassessed components should be comparable to that of the failed component and invited the member to contact him directly to discuss further. The student representative stressed that it is important that reassessment practices are aligned across all Schools to ensure all students are treated equally.

A member expressed disappointment that the policy would not be implemented this year, stating that the School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences are behind this policy and are in favour of implementation this year. Another member highlighted that the introduction of capping will bring some subjects into line with disciplinary norms in other institutions.

Several members endorsed the recommendation to pause the policy in its entirety until the academic year 2023/24. A member pointed out the importance of clear communication on this to mitigate the risk that pausing the policy mid academic year could undermine trust. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stated that communication on the policy to date has been consistent and unequivocal but that it is critical to address these issues, which necessitates the proposed pausing.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their contributions to the discussion. He stated that the policy has significant consequences for staff and students alike and informed members that he intends to bring a memorandum on the policy to the next USC meeting with the intention of ensuring the current USC members fully endorse the content of the policy. A member stressed that the decision to implement policies should not be driven by implementation issues and asked that proposed solutions are included in the memo.

- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies provided an update on the ongoing review of External Examiners policy and practice, advising that progress has been made and an item will be brought to the USC meeting in April.
- iii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies spoke to the topic of Academic Integrity, advising that the plans to conduct a survey on staff and student perceptions are currently being finalised. He provided an update on the work of the working group, stating that they are currently considering ways to support teaching staff in addressing academic misconduct. He further advised that events on the faculty level will be held in May on the week starting on the 8<sup>th</sup> or the 15<sup>th</sup>, and asked members to indicate when will be most suitable. Members were split on the most suitable date, but the week starting the 8<sup>th</sup> of May was deemed most suitable for the majority of those who spoke. He further advised that information on events held by QQI will be circulated to members in the coming days.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that communication on addressing the use of AI text generators will be issued to academic staff. He advised that a new appointment, who will work in the area of Academic Integrity and be based in Academic Affairs, will commence on Monday and that he is looking forward to work being progressed.

#### **Action/Decision**

**068.01:** USC supported the pausing of the procedures for the non-submission of coursework and absence from examinations for the current year 2022/23.

#### **USC/22-23/069 Facilitated Entry Grades: Trinity Access Programme Foundation Courses and TCD Partnership CDETB (City of Dublin Education and Training Board) Courses**

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A memorandum from the Educational Guidance Coordinator & Foundation Course Coordinator, Trinity Access Programmes, dated 2 March 2023, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Ms Sarah Grimson and Ms Bríd Hannon to the meeting, who spoke to the item by way of a presentation.

Ms Grimson provided an overview of the facilitated entry process for Trinity Access Programme (TAP) Foundation courses and Partnership Foundation Courses which facilitate progression to undergraduate programmes. She advised that these are mapped to specific CAO points bands, indicated in the circulated memo. She explained that the Leaving Certificate grade inflation in recent years has impacted on grade requirements for admissions, as these are mapped to previous years' CAO points. Many courses now require a distinction for entry, which disadvantages students and may introduce inflation of grades. In 2021/22, Council approved the mapping of grade requirements to an average of mapped grades over five years (from 2015 to 2019) for admission in 2022/23 and it is proposed that this measure is extended for 2023/24.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Ms Grimson for her presentation and stated that this will ensure students are not disadvantaged in the short term but that a more durable solution should be explored in the future.

In response to a query, Ms Grimson stated that the quotas for other access routes are not affected by this proposal. She confirmed that there was inflation of grades during COVID but that this decreased significantly last year.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Ms Grimson and Ms Hannon for attending the meeting and for the presentation.

**Action/Decision**

**069.01:** USC supported the proposal to extend the mapping of the Foundation Course and TCD Partnership CDET B grade requirements to a five-year average from 2015 to 2019 for admission to Trinity for September 2023.

**USC/22-23/070 Any Other Business**

None

**USC/22-23/063 Minutes (Section B)**

USC noted and approved, where necessary, the following sets of minutes:

- i. **MIE Associated College Degrees Committee**  
Minutes of the meeting of 2 March 2023
- ii. **Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee**  
Minutes of the meeting of 31 January 2023

**USC/22-23/064 Items for Noting (Section C)**

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

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- i. **Open Modules for 2023/24**  
Memorandum from the Undergraduate Common Architecture Governance Committee, dated 08 February 2023.