



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 14 November 2023 at 2.00 pm in the Boardroom, Trinity Business School.

Present: Professor David Shepherd, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Professor Richard Porter, Dean of Students
Professor Stephen Smith, Senior Tutor
Professor Mark Sweetnam, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture (ADUCA)
Professor Fraser Mitchell, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE)
Professor Martha O'Hagan Luff, Trinity Business School
Professor Miranda Fay Thomas, School of Creative Arts
Professor Ann Devitt, School of Education
Professor Julie Bates, School of English
Professor Anna Chahoud, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Sarah Hamill, School of Law
Professor Martin Worthington, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Margaret Walshe, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Clare Kelly, School of Psychology
Professor Dino Hadzic, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Phillip Curry, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Michael Kirwan, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies
Professor Valeria Nicolosi, 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 Jan Manschot, School of Mathematics
Professor Matthew Saunders, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Heather Reilly, School of Dental Science
Professor Richard Deane, School of Medicine
Professor Aileen Lynch, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent
Mr Eoghan Gilroy, Student Representative
Catherine Arnold, Education Officer, Students' Union

Apologies: Professor Cormac McGuinness, School of Physics
Professor Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology

In attendance: Ms Ciara Conlon, Academic Affairs; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary: Academic Affairs; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Dr Pauline Rooney, Director of Academic Practice; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Ms Roisin Smith, Quality Officer (for items USC/23-24/029 & USC/23-24/030); Mr Ronan Hodson, Admissions Officer and Ms Catherine Given, Erasmus & Study Abroad Manager (for item USC/23-24/031); Dr Liz Donnellan, Academic Affairs (for items USC/23-24/031 and USC/23-24/032).

USC/23-24/025 Minutes of the meeting of 17 October 2023

The minutes of the meeting of 17 October 2023 were approved.

USC/23-24/026 Matters arising

- i. **USC/23-24/008:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the Northern Ireland Deferral Scheme was approved by Council. Referring to the approval of the conclusion of the Northern Ireland Feasibility Study (USC/22-23/088), he noted that the final student intake will be in September 2025/26.
- ii. **USC/23-24/018:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the Trinity Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan was approved by Council and noted that he raised at the Council meeting that USC had approved the development and piloting of a common module focused on Education for Sustainable Development and the exploration of sustainable education pathways through the UG curriculum.
- iii. **USC/23-24/020:** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the Semester 1 Examinations Pilot was approved by Council. A member raised the issue of students who have been scheduled at both exam sites on the same day, to which the Director of Student Services responded, advising that the intention was to avoid this where possible and asked the member to contact her directly to discuss.
- iv. **USC/23-24/024(i):** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the revisions to the Appeals Policy was approved by Council.

USC/23-24/027 Senior Lecturer's Updates

- i. Speaking on the topic of Academic Integrity, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for their contributions to Academic Integrity week and informed USC that the Academic Integrity Steering Group (AISG) will review the findings of the McCabe survey on student and staff attitudes to Academic Integrity and information on this would be shared in due course.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies drew attention to the resources on the academic misconduct procedure available on the [Academic Affairs webpage](#). A member drew attention to the flowchart which outlines the procedure, pointing out that it doesn't currently reflect the role tutors play in supporting the student early in the process. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the member for the feedback and advised the meeting to send any further comments or suggestions to academic.integrity@tcd.ie.

Several members highlighted the need for more engagement with academic staff, particularly those who are tutors, so they can be adequately informed of the new process and procedures before the upcoming Semester 1 assessment period. Responding to the comments, the Senior Tutor advised that a communication will be issued to all tutors, which will include a recently recorded session on Academic Integrity procedures and a Blackboard module which contains pertinent information. In response to a member's remark regarding the cancellation of a workshop on misconduct procedures during Academic Integrity week, the Assistant Academic Secretary: Academic Affairs advised that this will be rescheduled to a more suitable time and advised that further resources, including a video, to support academic staff to understand the new process is currently being developed for wide dissemination. The Head of Academic Practice also drew attention to the recently developed [Academic Integrity SharePoint Hub](#).

- ii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that following discussions with IT Services, it has been established that it is not possible to disseminate LENS reports through Blackboard, however enhancements to SITs to allow teaching staff to view LENS is being explored and USC will be updated in due course. He advised that the issue of access to LENS reports will be considered as part of the VLE review.

- iii. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked members for responding to a call for volunteers to sit on a sub-group established to conduct a review of the VLE. He advised that he will co-chair the group with the Dean of Graduate Studies, and representatives from all three faculties are included in the group. He confirmed that Schools will also have an opportunity to feed into the review.

Action/Decision

027.01: The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies to follow up on communication to Schools regarding providing feedback to the VLE review.

USC/23-24/028 Revised USC Terms of Reference

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A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 6 November 2023, was circulated. He thanked members for their suggestions at the previous USC meeting and explained that the terms of reference have been revised further to reflect member's feedback, as well as some stylistic improvements and reordering of points for a more logical sequence. He requested that USC approve the revisions to the USC Terms of Reference.

Action/Decision

028.01: USC approved the revisions to the USC Terms of Reference and recommended them to Council.

USC/23-24/029 External Examiner Feedback Summary Report 2022/23

A report from the Quality Office was circulated, which provided a thematic summary of feedback received in External Examiner reports for the academic year 2022/23. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed the Quality Officer to the meeting for the discussion.

Speaking to the item, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies requested members feedback on themes and questions identified by the Quality Office in the report and a discussion ensued on the below topics:

Capstone Project: how can we ensure that there is not a disparity of student experience within a course (across Capstone Project Groups) or across courses in the same Discipline/School?

- Several schools have sought to establish guidelines for staff and students with respect to what constitutes appropriate supervision and feedback, what students can incorporate into their project, and other expectations prior to students commencing projects.
- In respect to marking, some schools enhance objectivity by having capstones (or a portion thereof) marked by someone other than the supervisor.
- One school provides workshops to students to equip them with appropriate research skills.
- The importance of diverse assessment modes was highlighted to allow students to express fulfilment of learning outcomes in different ways and provide students with choice.
- Consideration is needed of how students and their selection of capstones may be impacted by the costs of undertaking certain types of original research.
- The SU Education Officer suggested that a supervision agreement could be developed which would outline expectations for both parties to ensure mutual understanding and clear responsibilities.

Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence: What steps are Schools taking to educate students and staff in the appropriate use of AI? Have any Schools developed guidance or resources they are willing to share? What steps have been taken to diversify assessment to mitigate the impact of inappropriate use of AI?

- Some Schools have developed policies on the appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). For example, the Schools of Psychology and Business will allow students to declare use of Generative AI. The School of Business will implement this on a modular level, and students are invited to undergo a short oral exam if use is suspected but not declared.
- Members discussed the ongoing process of developing ways to teach students to use AI in an appropriate and discipline specific manner while also allowing for the assessment of student learning progress.
- One member reported a shift back to in class tests.
- The Student Representative highlighted the need for students to be taught to use AI in a responsible manner, and to be reminded of the bias that is inherent in AI models.

Marking: Other than tradition, what is preventing Courses/Schools using the full range of marks? Have Schools documented descriptors for subcategories of grades, particularly in the upper range?

- Many schools have developed marking rubrics, and one has introduced step-marking with grade descriptors developed to try to widen the range of marks student receive. It was noted that highly detailed rubrics could potentially result in the atomization of marks.
- One member remarked that teaching staff tend to follow marking traditions and are reluctant to deviate from previous marking practice.
- A member noted that although within their remit, external examiners don't tend to change marks.

Feedback: What do Schools do to ensure consistency in the amount and type of feedback? Do you differentiate between Generalised/Collective and Individual Feedback?

- The School of Psychology has introduced feedback requirements but are continuing to work to standardize feedback where possible.
- One member described instances where staff provide extensive feedback which students don't take on board, which can be discouraging for staff.

Thanking members for their input, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies concluded the discussion, advising that he will consider a mechanism for sharing best practice.

USC/23-24/030 National Student Survey Report 2022/23

A memorandum from the Dean of Students and the Quality Officer, dated 6 November 2023, was circulated. The National Student Survey Report 2022/23 was circulated along with a memorandum introducing the item and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed the Quality Officer to stay for the discussion. He invited the Dean of Students to speak to the item.

Thanking the Quality Office for putting together the report, the Dean of Students took the meeting through some of the findings, indicating areas that Trinity have scored highly in comparison to other Irish institutions, including higher-order and reflective and integrative learning. Referring to indicator scores for Trinity which are lower than peer institutions, he stated that these are typically areas that can be easily addressed to improve the student experience. He stated that input is to be invited from institutions regarding the revision of the survey planned for next year and advised that three of the indicators (Quality of Interactions, Effective Teaching Practice, Supportive Environment) in the current survey are expected to remain as they have been identified as indicators of teaching and learning in the

HEA System Performance Framework 2023 -2028. He suggested that efforts should be directed to addressing these areas.

Highlighting the inter-related nature of the three teaching and learning indicators, the Quality Officer advised that efforts could be focused on initiatives that could span across the three indicators, such as provision of feedback which could result in improved scores for Trinity. She stated that the survey provides a benchmarking opportunity for Trinity, due to the cross-sectorial aspect.

A discussion ensued on the representative nature of the results, with one member pointing out that only two students from their school had responded, which makes it difficult to assess how effective any efforts introduced to improve practice would be. Another member questioned how valid the data is, pointing out that the incentives offered to students to complete the survey may increase the participation rate but not necessarily produce reliable data. It was highlighted that the Students Union have passed a motion to boycott the survey, and the SU Education officer advised that they are collaborating with the Union of Students Ireland Vice President for Academic Affairs in seeking changes to the survey, warning that students will not engage with the survey unless it is fit for purpose. Agreeing with the previous point, the Academic Secretary stated that the survey takes too long to complete and that she hopes the SU can drive change in the area and commented on the resource burden of the survey for Trinity, which results in very little benefit to the university.

Responding, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies acknowledged the limitations of the survey and stated that he is also aware that Trinity risks reputational damage if it performs poorly in comparison to other Irish institutions. Thanking the meeting for their input, he advised that he will consider the next steps in addressing the feedback from the survey.

USC/23-24/031 Visiting Student Enrolment

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A memorandum from the Erasmus and Study Abroad Manager and the Admissions Officer, Academic Registry, dated 8 November 2023, was circulated and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Ms Catherine Given and Mr Ronan Hodson to the meeting.

Speaking to the item, the Erasmus and Study Abroad Manager stated that the proposal has been amended based on the discussion at the October USC meeting. Four proposed changes are being put forward, which if approved, will hopefully reduce timetabling clashes and multi-stage approvals and vastly improve the student experience. The four proposed changes are:

1. Hold an earlier enrolment period. A pilot is proposed for 2023/24 Hilary term, with enrolment scheduled for the period 1st - 13th December 2023. If successful, enrolment for Michaelmas term 2024/25 will be scheduled directly after the Online Module Enrolment period (24th July – 7th August 2024).
- 2(a). The number of disciplines for which visiting students may apply to be reduced from six to four.
- 2(b). Modules offered to visiting students by any discipline to be reduced to two years, which are at the discretion of the school.
3. Schools are requested to make every effort to increase or be flexible with module capacity.
4. Students who have been approved by Schools will not normally require further approval from module coordinators. Modules that do require further coordinator approval may enrol students separately (as is currently the practice).

Commenting on point 2(a), a member stated that it was discussed at the previous meeting that this issue would potentially be solved by an earlier enrolment period and questioned the need for this change. Responding, the Admissions Officer stated that Trinity's current practice is out of line with other institutions and the proposal will have a significant impact on reducing the complexity of the current enrolment process. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies suggested that if such concerns persist after 2(a) is implemented in the next enrolment period, this could be revisited. On this basis, members agreed to approve the proposal.

In response to a question on the definition of a discipline, the Erasmus and Study Abroad Manager confirmed that in the case of Engineering, each stream would be defined as one discipline and not the programme as a whole. A member pointed out that timetabling is carried out before visiting student enrolment which may lead to the assigned rooms being too small. The Erasmus and Study Abroad Manager advised that capacity indicated by the School will be adhered to strictly by Academic Registry, however timetabling is the remit of the Central Timetabling Unit. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised the member to discuss this issue with him separately.

Regarding point four, the Erasmus and Study Abroad Manager advised that it is proposed that by default, modules will not require additional approval and suggested that where additional module co-ordinator approval is required, students can contact the module co-ordinator directly. AR will then be supplied with the final student list, which would significantly reduce the volume of correspondence that the current process produces. In response to a question, the Erasmus and Study Abroad Manager stated students will be advised to contact module co-ordinators only during the enrolment period.

Concluding the discussion, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Erasmus and Study Abroad Manager and the Admissions Officer for their work on the proposal, advising that the new process will be reviewed after the pilot.

Action/Decision

031.01: USC approved the proposed changes to the visiting student enrolment process.

USC/23-24/032 Revision of the Programme Handbook Policy

A memorandum from Dr Liz Donnellan, Academic Affairs, dated 7 November 2023, was circulated. Welcoming Dr Donnellan to the meeting, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited her to speak to the item.

Speaking to a presentation, Dr Donnellan explained that the policy aims to standardise the handbook content across the university. She provided a summary of proposed changes, including new wording on generative AI and accessibility considerations, as well as removal of sections related to COVID-19. She explained that a bottom-up approach to policy revision is being piloted, which will involve initial consultation across College, with colleagues invited to provide feedback, which will then be considered and incorporated before the revised policy comes back to USC for approval. She invited members to circulate the feedback form to all relevant colleagues, who should complete it no later than 15th December 2023.

A member highlighted a recent change to the Statutes, in which the word 'Freshman' has been replaced with 'Freshers' or 'Fresh'. Dr Donnellan thanked him for bringing this to her attention and advised this will be incorporated into the revisions.

USC/23-24/033 Undergraduate Regulations: Attendance/ Non-Satisfactory Attendance

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 8 November 2023, was circulated. Due to lack of time, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of

Undergraduate Studies advised that he will instead seek member's feedback on the circulated memorandum via email prior to the December USC meeting.

USC/23-24/034 Any other business

- i. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited members to a Christmas gathering, hosted jointly by him and the Dean of Graduate Studies, which will be held on 18 December 2023 in Regent's House.
- ii. A member highlighted an issue with the lack of whiteboards in some lecture theatres. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies invited the member to contact him directly on this.

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