**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE**

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on **10ᵗʰ December 2008** at 3.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (Chair)
Senior Lecturer, Dr Aileen Douglas
Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)
  Dr Simon Trezise, School of Drama, Film and Music
  Dr Paul Delaney, School of English
  Professor Ciaran Brady, School of Histories and Humanities
  Dr Claire Laudet, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
  Dr Irene Walsh, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
  Dr Benjamin Wold for Dr Zuleika Rodgers, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
  Dr Jacco Thijssen, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
  Ms Ruth Torode, School of Social Work and Social Policy
  Dr James Quinn, School of Business
  Dr Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
  Dr Damian Murchan, School of Education
  Professor Ivana Bacik, School of Law
  Dr Kevin O'Kelly, School of Engineering
  Dr Jeremy Jones, School of Computer Science and Statistics
  Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
  Dr Ian Sanders, School of Natural Sciences
  Professor Ignatius McGovern, School of Physics
  Dr Michael Lyons, School of Chemistry
  Dr Daniela Zisterer, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
  Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
  Dr Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
  Ms Margaret Carroll for Dr Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery
 Professor Peter Coxon, Director of Science (TR071)
 Mr Hugh Sullivan, Education Officer Students' Union
 Mr Ashley Cooke, Students' Union representative
 Dr Brian Foley, Director of CAPSL
 Dr Jacqueline Potter, Academic Development Manager

Apologies: Professor Shaun McCann, School of Medicine
Dr Anne Marie Healy, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Johnnie Gratton, Director of TSM
Professor Alan Matthews, Director of BESS

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Director of Science (TR071), Professor Peter Coxon, to his first meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC).

UGS/08-09/008 **Minutes** of the meeting of the 4ᵗʰ November 2008 were approved.

UGS/08-09/009 **Matters arising**
(i) Research-led Teaching: The Academic Development Manager tabled an invitation to attend a discussion on Thursday 22ⁿᵈ January 2009 led by Alan Jenkins, Emeritus Professor at Oxford Brookes University, on the ways in which research and teaching can interact.

(ii) Academic Year Structure: The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer informed the meeting that the Fellows have assented to the proposed amendment of Chapter XVII of the 1966 Consolidated Statutes to allow for the introduction of the new academic year structure. He explained that that the amended section must now be approved by the

Visitors of the College and the Chancellor of the University and that discussions in respect of implementation are on going with staff representative bodies.

(iii) *Learning Outcomes*: The Academic Secretary reported that an information session on developing learning outcomes had taken place on Tuesday 9th December 2008. It was well attended by academic and administrative staff and was podcasted for those unable to attend. There will be a number of sessions held throughout January 2009, and she invited feedback on the 9th December session so as to inform further information sessions. The Bologna Desk is coordinating the learning outcomes project.

Queries relating to possible changes to examination processes, as a result of the introduction of learning outcomes, modularisation and semesterisation, were raised. Responding, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer indicated that this issue would be noted as an item for a future meeting to allow for a fuller discussion.

UGS/08-09/010 **Draft terms of reference for the Undergraduate Studies Committee:** The document *Undergraduate Studies Committee, Draft Terms of Reference,* dated December 2008, was circulated.

Introducing this item, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer outlined the membership of the USC as the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (Chair), Senior Lecturer, Academic Secretary, Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate), Director of the Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning (CAPSL) the Academic Development Manager of CAPSL, the Education Officer of the Students' Union, a second student representative, Course Directors of TSM, BESS and Science (TR071) and Ms Sorcha De Brunner as Secretary for 2008/09.

XX The meeting agreed to recommend to the University Council the terms of reference of the Undergraduate Studies Committee as follows:

- To consider and make recommendations on matters of academic policy relating to undergraduate teaching and learning including matters referred to it by Council and other College committees.
- To advise the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer in her/his role in coordinating education and research across College.
- To advise the Senior Lecturer in her/his role in reporting to the University Council on undergraduate student admissions, progression and examinations and applying Council regulations.
- To consider and advise on the Bologna process (ECTS, learning outcomes, modularisation, duration of undergraduate programmes, research-led teaching, transfer and progression) and to make recommendations to Council.
- To monitor and review quality assurance and improvement measures in respect of undergraduate programmes, teaching and learning.
- To assess new undergraduate course proposals and proposals to discontinue undergraduate courses and to make recommendations to Council.
- To consider on an annual basis proposed changes to the University Calendar in respect of undergraduate education and to make recommendations to Council.

UGS/08-09/011 **Review of the Scholarship Examination:** The document, *Review of the Scholarship Examination, Final Report*, dated October 2008, was circulated with the relevant minute of the Council meeting of 5th November 2008 (CL/08-09/028). A further document, *Steps for implementing Council's Decision on Scholarship*, dated 10th December 2008, was tabled.

The Senior Lecturer drew the meeting's attention to the recommendations approved by Council and Board of the Working Group on Scholarship, subject to some minor amendments. She informed the meeting that she and the Academic Secretary have been charged with coordinating the implementation of the recommendations. In this regard, she outlined a proposed process outlined in the tabled document. It was proposed that the Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) would be responsible for coordinating efforts at School level to articulate, in relation to its undergraduate academic programmes,

the ways in which the examination would succeed in identifying, in candidates, the qualities associated with Scholarship. In providing such statements, Schools should specify the objectives of the examination, the scope of the material covered and the number of papers to be sat. Where a course is multidisciplinary in nature, it is envisaged that such a statement would issue from the relevant Course/Coordinating Committee. Statements in relation to each eligible undergraduate course would be brought back to a future meeting of the USC to ensure consistency across College before recommendations are made to the Central Scholarship Committee. Schools and Course Committees, as relevant, will then be required to provide amended Calendar entries as appropriate on Scholarship.

The Committee discussed a number of issues arising from the proposed process. The following points were made:

- Clarification was sought as to the scope of material to be covered and the ways in which to assess fairly and consistently across topics.
- The meaning and continued existence of Scholarship were questioned. The opinion was expressed that College had missed an opportunity to tidy up the operation of the Scholarship Examination by not folding it into the annual examinations.
- The School of Dental Science emphasised the difficulty in accommodating the Scholarship examinations in the first weeks of Hilary Term. It was confirmed that there was no flexibility in this timeframe in the new academic year structure.
- It was observed that Schools are required to deal with a much greater workload this academic year with the introduction of learning outcomes, the new academic year structure, and changes to the Foundation Scholarship Examination.
- The closure of the Library over Christmas, which, under the new academic year structure, is the period immediately preceding the Scholarship Examination was highlighted as an issue needing to be addressed.
- The view was expressed that learning outcomes should be developed for the Scholarship Examination, but this was countered on the grounds that the Scholarship is not a specific programme but a unique voluntary examination.
- The method to be used for recording a student's achievement was discussed and it was confirmed that this should be facilitated with a new student administration system.
- Questions were raised in relation to where the responsibility lies for returning Foundation Scholarship Calendar entries. It was confirmed that the responsibility will lie with those currently responsible for returning and amending these entries. For example, each TSM subject will require a Scholarship entry as is currently the case.

In response to a question, the Senior Lecturer noted that exemptions from the annual examinations have been abolished and that there should be a distinction between the Scholarship Examination and the annual examinations. Scholarship examination questions should seek to elucidate in candidates the qualities associated with Scholarship and as such should be significantly different from those of the annual examinations.

In response to a request from the Students' Union Education Officer, it was agreed that the response document to the Scholarship recommendations prepared by the Students' Union be circulated to members of the committee.

The Senior Lecturer concluded the discussion, confirming that committee members would receive further information in relation to the implementation of the recommendations on Scholarship.

UGS/08-09/012 **Procedures for processing new undergraduate courses:** The document, *Process and Template for New Undergraduate Course Proposals,* dated December 2008 was circulated.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer summarised the required steps in the process to propose a new undergraduate course before it could be considered by the USC and later by Council. He emphasised the role of the Faculty Dean in sanctioning proposals at an early stage, given his/her remit over Faculty resources and space.

A committee member advised that lecture timetables should be considered before any further course proposals are put forward for consideration. This is especially important where modules are shared across programmes such as TSM, Science and BESS.

Responding to a query about the use of external assessors, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer explained that this has been the practice in relation to postgraduate courses for a number of years. He envisaged that this would be facilitated by the relevant School nominating three or four candidates from a relevant field, from which two would be chosen by the Senior Lecturer.

The meeting noted the procedures for processing new undergraduate courses.

UGS/08-09/013 **Research/Teaching balance:** A memorandum on *Academic Staff and Teaching/Research balance*, dated 4th December 2008, from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer was circulated.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer explained that there is some concern at government level that research is displacing teaching in the universities. At a recent meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science, TDs (Teachta Dála) and Senators expressed this concern and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that this matter was discussed at the meeting of Council on the 3rd December 2008. In order to engage properly in such discussions it is proposed that College conducts an exercise to discover the extent to which, if any, this is occurring. In this regard, he asked for feedback from the Committee as to the most efficient method to investigate this issue.

It was commented that this could become quite a complicated exercise given that the definition of teaching is broad and that the activity of teaching does not always take place as lectures or tutorials. Furthermore, given Trinity's promotion of research-led teaching, it would be unwise to define teaching as only that which can be timetabled.

Some members felt that their teaching hours had increased during the last five years. There was some discussion on the teaching duties of postgraduate students, and there was general consensus about the pedagogical benefits as well as career development opportunities in providing postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows with the opportunity to teach in certain situations.

In relation to the collation of the necessary information, several possible methods were suggested and discussed including the surveying of students; asking for information from recipients of Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLI) funding; requesting information through Heads of Schools or Heads of Disciplines; requesting the assistance of the Quality Office as Schools are expected to provide this information in their quality reviews; using Unit Cost information or reports downloaded from the timetabling system, Facility CMIS (Central Management Information System). It was also suggested that this study could take place over a number of years to gauge any emerging trends.

In conclusion it was agreed that as a first step in the process the Academic Secretary would provide each Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) with an extract from the timetabling system CMIS identifying undergraduate teaching scheduled for each academic staff member within their School for 2007-08. The Directors in conjunction with Heads of Discipline in their School will verify the data and add any undergraduate teaching not scheduled in the CMIS. This information will then be analysed and presented in the aggregate showing the percentage of undergraduate teaching by Professors, Associates Professors, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers.

UGS/08-09/014 **Broad Curriculum:** A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer dated 1st December 2008, was circulated with attached information concerning the Broad Curriculum (BC) and the initial distribution of small group teaching studentships.

The Senior Lecturer introduced this item and provided a brief background on developments to-date. She noted that a condition of the philanthropic funding received for the Broad Curriculum initiative was that the receiving Disciplines/Schools would continue

to offer the cross-faculty courses without additional resources after the initial five-year period. This five-year period expired in September 2007 in the case of five Broad Curriculum Lectureships; special funding for the remaining seven posts will be phased out from the end of the 2008/09 academic year, depending on the launch dates of individual cross-faculty courses.

The Senior Lecturer informed the meeting that the credit weighting of Broad Curriculum cross-faculty courses and language modules was revised from six down to five ECTS credits in 2007/08 in line with the Council decision of June 2006 which states that:

> *"All modules, whether in undergraduate or postgraduate programmes, should be designed to carry a credit weighting of 5 ECTS credits at their smallest, or multiples of 5 ECTS credits. A maximum of 10 ECTS credits should apply in the case of components/modules that are shared between programmes; core elements restricted to students on a particular degree programme could carry a higher weighting of 15 or 20 credits."* (Actum CL/05-6/215)

The Senior Lecturer explained that all students taking Broad Curriculum courses in 2008/09 will be doing so on a substitution basis only. In order to accommodate the requirement that these courses can be substituted for credit within the total 60 ECTS credits permitted for each course year, Schools have been requested to provide five-credit options to allow students wishing to take Broad Curriculum modules to do so.

She noted the need for a College position on the continuation of those cross-faculty BC courses funded by Atlantic Philanthropies following the end of the seed-funding. She also recommended that all courses should make provision within their curriculum to allow students who wish to take a BC course to do so.

The meeting discussed issues relating to the Broad Curriculum and ECTS at length. Responding to some confusion about Broad Curriculum modules and elective modules in the new core and elective curriculum approved by Council in May 2008, the Academic Secretary confirmed that when the core and elective curriculum is introduced, that a Broad Curriculum module could be taken as part of the ten ECTS reserved for elective modules from outside a student's home discipline. She explained, however, that the core and elective curriculum approved by Council could not be implemented until the adequate information systems are put in place.

Some concern was expressed about allocating ten ECTS for elective or BC modules within the 240 ECTS allocated to an undergraduate degree programme. It was pointed out that this matter was discussed at length over a protracted period of time by the Modularisation and Academic Year Structure Working Group, Council and other Committees, and it was agreed that all courses must comply with the new policy: any deviation from this policy would require Council approval.

One committee member commented that universities like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) allow students to take a significant proportion of modules outside their main programme of study in order to challenge students and to help develop logical thinking. He further illustrated how these modules are offered from established undergraduate courses and are perhaps therefore more rigorous than specially designed BC modules. It was suggested that the full adoption of the approved modular structure of the core and elective curriculum will ensure academic standards are maintained.

Concern was expressed about the academic standard of some existing BC modules. Some members noted that students can achieve grades which are out of line with their normal academic achievement. This causes some disquiet in Science (TR071) where BC modules are only open to Junior Sophister students leading to the BC grade being incorporated into the overall degree result. Anecdotal information was offered to suggest that students taking BC modules generally found these easier than modules within their main course of study.

It was suggested that, in the current economic climate, College should review the undertaking made with Atlantic Philanthropies to continue running cross-faculty courses

following the cessation of seed-funding. The Academic Secretary explained that Atlantic Philanthropies originally provided seed-funding to enable the opening up of the curricula. Since then, Council and Board have approved the introduction of the core and elective curriculum which provides for a minimum of 20 ECTS for electives. Timetabling permitting, students will be able to take modules outside their core discipline when modularisation is fully implemented.

XX   Following lengthy discussion and consideration of the issues involved, the meeting agreed to recommend to the University Council that:

     (i)   Schools in receipt of BC funding to deliver a cross-Faculty BC module should either continue to make the broad curriculum module available or provide an option from within the curriculum as an elective for students from outside that discipline. Such electives should also carry 5 ECTS as is the case for all BC modules.

     (ii)   All courses should make provision within their curriculum to allow students who wish to take a Broad Curriculum or elective module to do so.

UGS/08-09/015   **Trinity Access Programmes:** A memorandum, *Mature Student Admissions Policy*, dated 1st December 2008 from the Access Officer to the Senior Lecturer, was circulated.

The Academic Secretary spoke to this item and explained that currently mature students, coming through the *Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) Foundation Course – Mature Student* and the *County Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) Liberal Arts Course for Mature Students* are required to attend interviews as part of the selection process for entry to their chosen undergraduate degree course. Places are offered to successful interviewees, subject to their attaining the required grade at the end of their foundation course. This system has led in some instances to the situation where a high achieving student does not gain an undergraduate Trinity place, while a fellow student with lower grades achieves a place based on his/her performance at interview.

The Academic Secretary noted that the Foundation Course in question is approved, delivered and examined by Trinity College staff and there is substantial Trinity involvement in the CDVEC Liberal Arts Course. CDVEC students may only use the course as a progression route to undergraduate programmes in the Arts and Social Science. In the context of Bologna and the National Qualifications Authority Framework it is important that there are progression opportunities for graduates based on output and achievement. She highlighted the fact that Trinity's policy towards these two categories of mature students is anomalous to the sectoral position, whereby other Higher Education Institutions allow for progression to undergraduate degree courses based on academic merit alone.

The meeting discussed this proposal at length. Some concerns were raised in relation to removing the interview process for mature students entering professional courses. While the interview process was believed to have some merit, it was also pointed out that there is a lack of consistency across Disciplines in the approach to interviews. It was also noted that school leavers are not interviewed for the same professional courses and are not asked to account for their interest in any given subject.

In response to queries, the Academic Secretary further clarified that mature students are interviewed by Trinity staff for a place on the *Foundation Course* or the *CDVEC Liberal Arts Courses*. She suggested that it would be possible to involve representatives from professional courses at this early stage. She also commented that approximately 800 applications are received annually from mature students who are not progressing from the *Foundation Course* or one of the *CDVEC Liberal Arts Courses,* and confirmed that Schools could continue to interview these applicants as part of the selection process.

In response to a query, the Academic Secretary explained that all access students are offered places within the 15% quota reserved for non-traditional students. Some courses offer places in excess of 15% of the course quota whereas others find it difficult to fill the 15% quota. She advised the meeting that the quota system is tightly controlled and disciplines can 'rank list' those students with the best results for admission.

XX   The committee agreed to recommend to the University Council the elimination of the interview procedure as part of the undergraduate admissions selection process for mature students graduating from the *TAP Foundation Course* and mature disadvantaged students graduating from the *CDVEC Liberal Arts Courses,* subject to there being an appropriate mechanism for the involvement of representatives from professional courses in the admission process. Successful graduates of the *TAP Foundation Course* and the *CDVEC Liberal Arts Courses* should be considered for entry to undergraduate programmes at Trinity College on academic merit only and subject to a place being available. The minimum grade achievement, along with subject specific grades, where required, to be considered eligible for admission is as follows:

Minimum Grade - TCD Foundation Course	Minimum Grade CDVEC Liberal Arts (eligible for access to courses in Arts and Social Science only)	Competitive for courses within the Points Bands
1	Distinction (80%+)	550-570+
2.1	Merit (65-79%)	485-545
2.2	Merit	325-480

UGS/08-09/016   **Any other business**
(i)   *Non-satisfactory procedure:* Following a request that the non-satisfactory procedure be re-examined, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that this matter would be discussed at a future meeting of the USC.
(ii)   *Reading Weeks:* The Academic Secretary advised, in response to a query, that the Faculty Deans are responsible for agreeing the timing of reading weeks within their Faculties to avoid overlap of teaching and reading weeks in the new academic year structure. In response to a further query, she confirmed that not all courses offer a reading week and that it is not compulsory for Schools to have reading weeks.
(iii)   *Christmas Drinks:* The committee was reminded that the Christmas drinks reception would take place in the Hist Conversation room in the Graduate Memorial Building at 5.30pm.

signature   *date*