

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN  
TRINITY COLLEGE**

***Undergraduate Studies Committee***

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A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on **3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009** at 2.15pm 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 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 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  
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Shaun McCann, School of Medicine  
Dr Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science  
Dr Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Dr Anne Marie Healy, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor Peter Coxon, Director of Science (TR071)  
Professor Johnnie Gratton, Director of TSM  
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:** Dr Simon Trezise, School of Drama, Film and Music  
Dr Michael Lyons, School of Chemistry  
Dr Daniela Zisterer, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Alan Matthews, Director of BESS

**In attendance:** Mr Trevor Peare, Ms Sorcha De Brunner

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The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Mr Trevor Peare to his first meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC). He informed the meeting that Mr Peare, would be in attendance as the Library Representative and noted that this arrangement mirrored the practice at the Graduate Studies Committee.

**UGS/08-09/026 Minutes** of the meeting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2009 were approved.

**UGS/08-09/027 Matters arising:**

(i) *UGS/08-09/019:* The split of ECTS credits over the two teaching semesters was queried in relation to the Two Subject Moderatorship (TSM). The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer explained that if a 15 credit maximum per subject, per semester, was maintained then all combinations in TSM should work. He stated that there may be a few exceptions to this which would need to be worked out over the coming academic year. He confirmed that Council had approved a split of 30 ECTS credits in each semester.

A proposal for the implementation of a College-wide study week was put forward. It was also suggested that the Open Day could take place during the Michaelmas study week. However, it was explained that external factors and logistical issues affect the date of the Open Day. It was also commented that study weeks are for students and staff to read and do research.

**UGS/08-09/028 Up-skilling/Re-skilling:**

A memorandum, *Re-Skilling/Up-skilling: TCD initiatives in the economic downturn*, dated 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009, from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and the Academic Secretary, was circulated with attached data concerning student withdrawal rates in the 2001/02, 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05 cohorts of students on all undergraduate courses.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer spoke to the item. He highlighted the fact that Ireland is in the middle of an economic crisis and pointed to the high level of unemployment which is affecting all groups of workers, including third-level graduates. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has requested proposals from the universities relating to educational opportunities for recently unemployed individuals in the State.

He informed the meeting that Trinity is examining areas in which to provide up-skilling and re-skilling for those who have recently lost their employment. Up-skilling refers to the provision of more up-to-date skills in the area of a graduate's original study; re-skilling refers to providing skills in a new area of study thereby allowing the recently unemployed to gain work in a new field. He noted that College is currently assessing graduate and undergraduate education options, as follows:

*Graduate Level*

- The provision of dedicated 'post experience' Masters programmes in Biotechnology; Information Technology; and Environmental Management; and
- The development of a Diploma/Masters in Entrepreneurship.

*Undergraduate Level*

- Development of Higher Diploma options across undergraduate degree programmes.

In relation to the undergraduate section of the proposal, he explained it was envisaged that a number of higher diplomas could be developed which would allow graduates to return to College, through a specialised admission route, to take modules from the Sophister years of suitable courses and to graduate with a Higher Diploma after one or two years. On foot of proposals, such programmes may be able to attract special funding from the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

The Academic Secretary referred to the statistical data on withdrawal rates and commented that at the end of Senior Sophister year, many undergraduate courses have experienced quite significant withdrawal rates, which indicates that there may be capacity to open up the Sophister years of these programmes to recently unemployed graduates.

In relation to developing a number of Higher Diploma courses linked to modules in the Sophister years, the following comments and queries were made:

- when calculating capacity, quotas must also be considered. If the number of entrants in the Junior Freshman year initially exceeded quota, then student withdrawals may not create capacity. Actual as opposed to perceived capacity needs to be analysed;
- admitting Higher Diploma students, to take Sophister modules, could adversely affect staff/student ratios;
- in terms of offering a qualification, such as a Higher Diploma, a two year programme is more realistic than a one year programme;
- the fees implications for students returning under such a scheme would need to be considered;
- such a proposal does not fit all programmes, for example, programmes which require students to spend one year abroad;
- making modules available from all four years of undergraduate programmes would allow for more coherent progression;
- pre-designed programmes would be required;

- education has intrinsic value and third-level education does not exist solely to prepare graduates for employment;
- up-skilling would be more easily implemented than re-skilling;
- consideration must be given to classifying any resulting programmes appropriately on the National Qualifications Framework.

The Senior Lecturer commented that if this proposal were to be approved, a guarantee would be needed in relation to students' fees as it would be very hard for the recently unemployed to return to education without support. On the issue of capacity, she advised that it is up to each School to confirm their levels of capacity. She also advised that it would not be sufficient to only make certain modules available; returning graduates would need to be enrolled on pre-designed programmes.

The Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) from the School of Education explained that the Higher Diploma in Education (Primary Teaching) was developed to address a shortage of primary teachers in Ireland. Some modules are shared with the Bachelor in Education but it has developed as a separate programme. The Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) from the School of Psychology advised that the Higher Diploma in Psychology works very well.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that the proposal was recommended in principle, subject to a number of logistical issues being worked out. He thanked members of the Committee for their input.

**UGS/08-09/029 Research-led teaching:** A memorandum, *Research-led teaching*, dated 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009, from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer was circulated, with an attached discussion document from the Academic Development Manager, *Linking teaching and research within the undergraduate curriculum – the role of disciplines and Schools in developing research-enhanced education*.

Speaking to this item, the Academic Development Manager informed the Committee that her discussion paper builds on previous exchanges at USC and, in particular, on the recommendations from the Education Officer of the Students' Union that research-led teaching should be defined with specific objectives set for its implementation, a mechanism should be introduced to assess the interconnectivity between research and teaching in Schools and ways to develop research-led teaching to benefit undergraduate students and researchers should be explored. Given the discipline specific nature of research-led teaching she explained that her paper proposes that the formulation of its definition should be devolved to each School. Each School should discuss and develop their strategic plans to further enhance research-led teaching in the undergraduate programmes they deliver. To assist in the development of their plans in this area, she referred the meeting to the list of questions contained in her discussion document which could act as prompts to initiate and assist discussions.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Academic Development Manager and notified the meeting that a Strategic Planning Team (SPT), led by the Senior Lecturer, has been set up to co-ordinate strategic planning in the area of undergraduate education.

**UGS/08-09/030 Non-satisfactory returns procedure:** The Calendar entry, *Non-satisfactory attendance and course work*, (§§ 23 and 24, H6, 2008/09) was circulated with the *Report on a Non-Satisfactory Student*, updated May 2006.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer introduced the item, noting that issues surrounding the process of returning a student as 'non-satisfactory' had been raised previously by a member of the Committee.

A discussion concerning the current procedures ensued and the following points were made by Committee members:

- it is important to retain the process as it acts as an early warning to students that they need to watch their attendance and/or submission of coursework;

- tutors should remain involved in the process and should view their participation positively; they have an advisory role and this is important in helping to retain students;
- students should be made more aware of the procedure;
- the procedure seems to be used unevenly across College and it should be redesigned in the e-Strategy process;
- the Calendar entry and report form need to be modified to take account of the new academic year structure;
- a third option should be inserted in Section II, which is completed by the Tutor, to indicate that the student has not responded to the Tutor's communications.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that the necessary changes would be made to the Calendar entry and procedures document.

**UGS/08-09/031** **Review of Scholarship:** A document, *Guidelines for the Scholarship Examination*, dated 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009 was circulated along with a spreadsheet, *Review of Foundation Scholarship Examination 2009/10*, also dated 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009 and a memorandum from the Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) from the School of English, *Examination Practice: Foundation Scholarship*, dated the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2009.

The Senior Lecturer speaking to the *Guidelines for the Scholarship Examination*, explained that they contain draft statements, relating to the Foundation Scholarship Examination for each Faculty. The purpose of these statements is to enumerate the qualities expected of Scholarship candidates. Such statements, when finalised, will help examiners to set their Scholarship papers.

It was commented that the statement for the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences should include a reference to 'problem solving'. It was also requested that the statement for the Faculty of Health Sciences be amended to include 'pharmaceutical' in the list of disciplines provided in the overarching statement and to incorporate the clause 'and the treatment of disease' at the end of the second bullet point.

The Academic Development Manager commented that the draft Faculty statements did not adequately capture the exceptional skills and qualities normally expected of candidates in order to receive Scholarship. She noted the lack of words such as excellence and innovation.

The Academic Secretary explained that the statements, as circulated, are still in draft format and had been presented to the Undergraduate Studies Committee to ascertain their appropriateness. She noted that the Faculty descriptors required alteration to allow for the identification of exceptionality in candidates. She informed the meeting that the statements would be considered by the Central Scholarship Committee.

The Academic Secretary referred to the document, *Review of Foundation Scholarship Examination 2009/10*, which presented consolidated information in respect of all eligible undergraduate programmes. She noted the operational importance of having advance knowledge of the number of hours of written examinations and the number of papers in order to draft an examination schedule to fit within a one-week period.

The Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) from the School of Histories and Humanities advised the meeting that his Head of School had written to the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer to request flexibility in the maximum time allowed for written papers for undergraduate programmes with which his School is involved. He stated that the opinion of the School of Histories and Humanities was that a maximum of nine hours is insufficient, especially in relation to TSM subjects and requested that they be allowed to set examinations up to a maximum of 12 hours of written papers. This would allow for four, 3-hour papers in single and joint honor programmes and two, 3-hour papers for one subject within TSM.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that all Schools returning information, for the 2009/10 academic year, had been able to comply with the requirement of a maximum

of nine hours of written papers and as such different treatment for the School of Histories and Humanities would be hard to justify.

Coherence at College level on the overall duration of written examinations was referred to and it was generally commented that Schools had contributed a lot of time to review their Scholarship examinations. Thus further negotiation on the number of hours for written papers would not be welcomed. A number of suggestions from members were put to the School of Histories and Humanities, such as, reducing the number of questions to be answered and the possible use of continuous assessment.

The Academic Secretary drew the attention of the meeting to the memorandum, *Examination Practice: Foundation Scholarship*, which concerns the issue of the anonymous marking of Scholarship examination scripts. She informed the meeting that this matter had been discussed before by the Working Group on Anonymous Marking. That working group did not recommend its implementation as anonymity could not be retained with small numbers, resulting in unequal treatment of students across College. She also advised that the information system used to facilitate the Scholarship examinations does not have capacity for generating anonymous numbers, however, she added that the Committee might consider agreeing in principle to the introduction of anonymous marking for Scholarship examinations. It was commented that anonymity could not be preserved across College with the use of *viva voce*, continuous assessment and practical examinations in several undergraduate programmes.

The Undergraduate Studies Committee agreed to the introduction of anonymous marking for Scholarship examinations subject to the information systems being available to facilitate this.

**UGS/08-09/032** **Calendar changes 2009/10:** Amendments to programme entries in TSM, and the Faculties of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences, Engineering Mathematics and Science and Health Sciences, for the University Calendar 2009/10, were circulated.

Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Secretary to USC spoke to the item and made a number of general points in relation to the amendments to the University Calendar 2009/10. She advised, as in previous years, that staff in the Vice-Provost's Office would work with staff in the Enquiries Office to edit the Calendar and that Schools would be contacted further in this regard. She thanked those Schools which had looked at the use of the terms 'course'/'programme', 'subject' and 'module' and had revised their entries accordingly.

She also indicated that the use of 'thesis' was slipping back into use in some undergraduate course entries. She advised that in Trinity, 'thesis' has a particular meaning in relation to postgraduate research; 'dissertation' should be used at the undergraduate level instead.

#### *TSM*

There were no queries raised in relation to the entries returned under TSM.

#### *Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*

She informed the meeting that the Centre for Deaf Studies and the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences were developing a proposal for a Degree in Deaf Studies, which would be most likely presented at the next meeting of USC. As such a new course entry for a degree in Deaf Studies would replace the entries for the Diplomas in Deaf Studies, Irish Sign Language/English Interpreting and Irish Sign Language Teaching.

Noting that the Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) from the Schools of Histories and Humanities and Law had already left the meeting to teach, she informed the Committee that she would follow up on specific queries in relation to their submitted Calendar changes subsequent to the meeting.

#### *Engineering, Mathematics and Science*

She noted that the School of Computer Science and Statistics had submitted an amendment to the Engineering, Mathematics and Science Faculty Regulations section and advised that changes to this section must be sanctioned by the Faculty Office. She

also pointed out that credits specified for the Junior Sophister year of Management Science and Information Systems Science, as submitted, exceeded the 60 credit norm. She informed the Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) that if this were the case, rather than a typographical error, the Bologna Desk should be contacted.

In relation to the inclusion of 'With effect from 2011, Senior Sophister students in the above streams will be assessed in accordance with (b) above.' in the entry for the Bachelor in Engineering, she queried if it was intended to introduce this rule for the 2010/11 or 2011/12 academic year. She advised that if it were to apply to Senior Sophisters in the 2011/12 academic year then this provision should not be included in the Calendar until 2010/11.

#### *Health Sciences*

In relation to the final year of the Medicine programme, she noted that the School intended to use the result 'first class honors, with distinction'. She advised that this was not an official result and so could not be returned on the formal results sheet for the year. She also noted that the criteria provided were more stringent than the criteria used to award gold medals to degree students in the programme.

She notified the meeting that she would follow-up with Schools in relation to the queries she had raised.

**UGS/08-09/033** **Any other business:** The Education Officer, Students' Union queried if the meeting could recommend that Schools include information on referencing styles, which had been prepared by the College Disability Service, in their course/student handbooks. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer advised that it would be more appropriate for this information to be brought in the first instance to the Senior Lecturer for her consideration.

**UGS/08-09/034** **Items for noting** The USC noted the documents circulated for information:

- (i) *Learning Outcomes for programmes: process for development and validation*, memorandum from the Bologna Desk, dated 25<sup>th</sup> February 2009.
- (ii) *Police/Garda Vetting Policy and Procedures 2008/2009*.
- (iii) *TSM Subject Name Changes*, memorandum from the TSM Administrator, dated 20<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

**signature**

**date**